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# Ella Flagg Young: portrait of a leader

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Ella Flagg Young: Portrait of a leader

by

Joan Karen Smith

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Major: Education (History, Philosophy,  
and Comparative Education)

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DEDICATION

To my grandmother Anna Elizabeth —

who graduated from a Chicago grammar school when

Mrs. Young was a district superintendent

And to my father Raymond —

who started in the Chicago public schools when

Mrs. Young started her superintendency.

## PREFACE

On October 28, 1918, in the middle of war and an influenza epidemic, the city of Chicago lowered its flags to half-mast, draped the board of education meeting room in black, and noted the passing of Ella Flagg Young. One of the most notable careers in American education had come to an end. Spanning more than 50 years of Chicago's growth from a mud-streeted town to powerful metropolis, it was a career marked by achievements and "firsts." She was the first woman to head a major city school system, the first woman to be paid \$10,000 a year for a public service job, and the first woman to be president of the National Education Association. She was part of the small band of scholars at the University of Chicago — George Mead, James Angell, E. W. Moore, James H. Tufts, and John Dewey were the others — who published a series of monographs in the Decennial Publications of the University (1903) that led William James to declare that Chicago had a school of thought. This work was a significant part of the intellectual basis for the democratic and pragmatic thrust in American education which later came to be identified with John Dewey. Ella Flagg Young was the only one of the group who wrote directly about education in the series. She was a major influence on Dewey's thinking at the time he wrote The School and Society. It was Ella Flagg Young who formulated the idea and introduced the practice of "teachers' councils" into school administration. These were democratic gatherings of teachers, organized to enable the teaching force to participate in policy formation.

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None of her achievements represented tokenism. She earned her own way through every step of the journey. She was thorough, emotionally strong, keenly intelligent, and well informed. Her belief in teachers and children and her sense of honesty gave her a commitment which sometimes put her at cross purposes with special interests. Her announcement as president of the NEA (1910) that she intended to have an investigation of the permanent fund of that group provoked such consternation in some of the "old-guard" members that a fierce struggle ensued. Milwaukee Superintendent Carroll Pearse believed firmly at one point in the controversy that those who feared exposure intended to have Mrs. Young killed. Her refusal as superintendent in Chicago to be used or to allow the school system to be used by a few board of education members led to intense opposition in some quarters and powerful loyalty in others. When some people on the board tried to unseat her in 1913, city-wide protests in her behalf resulted. In the battle which ensued, she had the support of teachers' groups, women's clubs, and some men's organizations. She retained the job to the disappointment of her opponents. One of her critics, John Harding, a board member who had insisted that she recommend a particular book for adoption, was so upset that he announced to all who cared to hear that Superintendent Young and one of her allies (Margaret Haley) were "witches." He yelled in a rage before a large gathering of people that he didn't "blame the people of ancient times for hanging witches. I did once, but I don't now." She was known both by the friends she kept and by the enemies she made (Chicago Record Herald, December 22, p. 1, col. 5).

Ella Flagg Young was a prominent figure in the turn of the century activities which historians call "the progressive movement." She advocated equal rights for women, though she thought her life was a better statement than any of the speeches she made. She was a participant in many of the reform movements of the time. Her belief in democratic school administration, the inclusion of vocational and technical education in the common school curriculum, and the validity of sex education are widely shared educational values today. They were opposed stringently at the time.

Despite the significance of Ella Flagg Young's life, career and thought in American educational history, no adequate account is available. She is rarely mentioned in any of the more general histories of American education. Some specialized studies make brief references. Edgar Wesley's NEA: The First Hundred Years gives a very brief summary of her career. Merle Curti's The Social Ideas of American Educators notes her work in passing. Surprisingly, the briefest mention of all is in Lawrence Cremin's The Transformation of the School. In this 400-page book, which is intended as a full-scale history of progressivism in American education, Cremin devotes only part of one sentence in the text to Ella Flagg Young, even though in a footnote reference he quotes Jane Dewey's observation that her father regarded Mrs. Young "as the wisest person in school matters with whom he has come in contact in any way" (p. 135 of the 1961 Vintage edition). Perhaps this says something about the masculine orientation of educational historiography.

Because so little information was available, I could not guess when I began my own two and a half year search through newspapers,



minutes, annals, proceedings, and archives what I would think of Ella Flagg Young when I had concluded. For a long time, as I viewed her through other people's eyes, I thought that I would not care much for the kind of person she was. As all the pieces began to fall into place, however -- as I began to write the account which follows -- I realized that in common with many of her contemporaries I, too, liked her. She was, indeed, an unusual person: talented, honest, loyal to her commitments, and devoted to the public schools and the teachers in them.

In presenting this account, I have tried to convey an integrated sense of what she was like -- of her personality and development and the situations in which she lived. If those who read it feel they have encountered a remarkable woman, educator and leader, I shall have succeeded.

Joan K. Smith

July 1976

FRONTISPICE

Dr. Ella Flagg Young, Superintendent of Schools, Chicago, Illinois,  
1909-1915.

Chicago Historical Society. Used by permission.



## CHAPTER 1

## EARLY YEARS

On July 30, 1909 major newspapers throughout the country carried accounts similar to this one taken from page one of the New York Times:

A WOMAN HEAD OF SCHOOLS.

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Chicago Board Selects Mrs. E. F. Young  
for City Superintendency.

Special to The New York Times.

CHICAGO, July 23. Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, Principal of the Chicago Normal School, and one of the best-known educators of the Middle West, will be the new Superintendent of the Chicago public schools. For the first time in the history of Chicago a woman will occupy the Superintendency of public schools.

Mrs. Young was selected by the members of the Chicago Board of Education, sitting as a Committee of the Whole, tonight. The formal election of Mrs. Young to the superintendency will take place tomorrow night at a special meeting of the board, the call for which was issued by President Alfred R. Urion before adjournment tonight.

The unanimous selection of Mrs. Young at the close of a three-hour session, during which six candidates for the place, all Principals of Chicago schools, appeared before the committee and answered questions pertaining to the administration of the schools, and the position of Superintendent. The action of the board in unanimously selecting the Chicago woman brought to a close three weeks of caucuses and informal meetings, and was the last important business of the school year.

Mrs. Young's selection followed a struggle for the office, which has been going on since the resignation of Edwin G. Cooley several months ago. At one time the question of Mr. Cooley's successor appeared to foreshadow a split among the members of the board. Many educators from other cities have been urged by their friends.

At its meeting tonight the board also created a new position in the schools, that of assistant to the Superintendent. John D. Shoop, Supervisor of Vacation Schools, was named for the place.

For a woman to head any of the country's public school systems was indeed a rarity in 1909; but for a woman to be head of the public schools in the second largest city in the United States was quite astounding and almost preposterous! Speculation ensued: How did it happen? What was going on in Chicago? Was it petticoat politics? Was she to be a mere figurehead who would not interfere with the board's administration of schools? Wasn't she too old? Perhaps she was just a neutral compromise, since the board spent four months wrangling over who they would appoint to the position.

After the speculation was over, another even more important question arose: Who was this Mrs. Young? The papers carried a brief biographical sketch of some of her accomplishments, but who was she really? What kind of a person was she to reach such an unusual goal for a woman?<sup>1</sup>

As it turned out the second question was as difficult to answer as the first, for very few people knew much about this remarkable lady other than that she had been involved in education most of her life.

#### Family Background

People who knew Mrs. Young said that she was reluctant to talk about herself and her family. When asked personal questions in interviews, her custom was to elude the answer by focusing attention on her interests at that particular time. Yet, in spite of her proclivity toward privacy friends knew how deeply she revered her parents and the strong, positive influence that they had on her early years.<sup>2</sup>

Her father, Theodore Flagg, was an only child born December 12, 1815 in Albany, New York.<sup>3</sup> Orphaned in infancy, he was raised by relatives and received the type of education and training that was typical for a working class boy during the early 19th century. His formal education came to a halt at the age of ten when his cousin apprenticed him to the sheet metal trades. The industriousness, determination and diligence of his Scottish ancestry served to reveal itself in the next years of his life, for he finished what was normally an apprenticeship of about seven years duration in only five. With three years of apprenticing left he asked his foreman if there was any way he could finish the rest of the work in a shorter amount of time. After consideration the foreman laughingly outlined requirements and tasks that he thought would be impossible for anyone to complete in less than three years, and left. Theodore, however, worked day and night for the next year thereby completing the work to become a skilled mechanic. He was to spend his next working years earning the reputation of being the "swiftest workman in the sheet metals throughout the cities on the Great Lakes."<sup>4</sup>

In his midtwenties he married Jane Reed, a pretty young Scottish girl who was almost ten years his junior. She too exhibited traits considered to be characteristic of the Scots, for she was a thrifty, tolerant, hard-headed and practical person who took pride in the fact that she could trace her lineage to the Highland clan of Cameron.

The Flagg's made their home in Buffalo, New York, where Theodore's occupational skills could be fruitfully engaged. Since its incorporation as a village in 1813 the town's population had grown from 500 to around

9,000 in 1832 and 18,213 in 1840. In the last eight years it had doubled in size and economic prosperity seemed likely. Due to its location, plus recently completed water transportation facilities, the town was expected to become one of the major maritime cities in the country. Grain warehouses lined the wharves and the harbor bustled with activity. By 1845 the population was 29,973.<sup>5</sup>

In 1845 Theodore and Jane were 29 and 20 years old respectively, and their family was completed: The eldest was a girl, Cecelia Sara, who was described as being quick-witted and a "ready observer of her environment;" the boy, Charles Theodore, was characterized as a healthy, strong youth with a remarkable aptitude for pencil sketching; and the youngest, Ella, was thought to be a delicate sickly child — a situation which Ella spent the next 15 years fighting successfully to change.

#### Childhood

Ella was born January 15, 1845, and grew up knowing little of other children. Her mother said that her "chief aim in life was to make Ella as well and happy as fresh air and sunshine would help to make a delicate little girl."<sup>6</sup> It has never been clear why Ella was described this way. As far as she or anyone else later knew, her condition was not diagnosed by a doctor. Perhaps she suffered from allergic reactions, or perhaps it was largely the result of a mother's subconscious drive to care for and protect her last born and keep her close.<sup>7</sup> At any rate the cure was to keep her at home and out of school with outdoor tasks such as gardening. Ella had to garden every

day, an activity which she grew to dislike enormously until later on when her brother started helping her. What she did like to do was to visit her father at the forge. She was in the habit of sitting for hours watching him work and asking questions about the operations that he performed. She absorbed so much understanding of her father's trade that in later years when she was a district superintendent of schools in Chicago, she was offered the management of a large manufacturing plant because, said the owner, "she knew more about its affairs than anyone else."<sup>8</sup>

Religion played an important role in the Flagg home, but it did not have a dogmatic character to it. They were Presbyterians who believed in card playing, theater, dancing and current literature of the time. Mr. Flagg was an avid reader and often his readings conflicted with some of the church doctrines such as predestination. He was fond of discussing religious issues with his friends, and both of the Flaggs practiced religious toleration. Consequently, the home environment was free from cant and dogma.

Jane Flagg was the financial and practical manager of the household and the children looked to her for guidance. In later years Ella said that "from her I learned to face things squarely.... There is nothing strange in the fact that I have taken so readily to practical affairs and have had ability to manage."<sup>9</sup> Her mother was also ready to help those in need. Quite often, sick children of her friends would call on her for assistance. So much was this the case that her husband felt compelled to point out that it would be a good idea for mothers



to learn how to take care of their own children, so that his wife's duties and labor were not increased to a burdensome level.

Since Ella did not go to school no one thought it necessary to teach her to read, and when she was eight or nine years old she determined to teach herself. At the breakfast table one morning the conversation turned excitedly to an item in the morning newspaper. It was an account of a tragic schoolhouse burning with the children being trapped inside and jumping out of windows. Horror-stricken Jane said, "think of it, little children of Ella's age threw themselves out of upper-story windows!"<sup>10</sup> When breakfast was over Ella asked her mother to read the story to her. Crying for the fate of those poor children in the school, she took the paper in her arms and went into a room by herself to try to read. She remembered the beginning of what her mother had read and matched this with the beginning words in the article. When she could remember no more she went to the kitchen to get help from the girl who worked for them. In this manner, she slowly worked her way through the fairly short article and became very interested in learning to read. She continued to teach herself by utilizing available books which consisted mostly of the Bible and a few other religious works. Although no one took notice of her perserverence, she continued doggedly to increase her reading acuity. One day during one of her mother's quilting bees, she got her chance to demonstrate a bit of knowledge acquired from recently developed skills. During part of a conversation she participated by expounding on a Calvinistic doctrine. A surprised hush fell over the quilters as her mother embarrassedly put an arm around Ella saying, "I don't know how this little Calvinist got

into the family, but we are all glad she is here."<sup>11</sup> The activity of the quilting session resumed and Mrs. Cameron, Ella's great aunt by marriage, called the little girl over to sit beside her. Moments later she said, "Jeannie, you know what this child is reading? — Baxter's Call to the Unconverted." The rest of the women started to laugh, but Ella's mother did not. Instead, she very firmly in a calm, dignified manner told Ella to put on her sunbonnet and go to her garden. Quickly and quietly the little girl left the room, and the quilting was resumed once again. The next day Mrs. Flagg took Ella to the store where she purchased "Mother Goose Stories" for her daughter; Baxter's Call to the Unconverted was immediately relegated to the bottom of an attic trunk filled with old magazines. Even with these children's stories to read, Ella continued to read the Bible so that by the time she was ten she had memorized most of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Corinthians, and the Psalms.<sup>12</sup> Also, by the time she was ten, learning to write interested her, and so she added another skill to her list of accomplishments. Slowly but persistently Ella was increasing her independence and changing that image of delicacy which she had lived with for so long. She and her brother devised — and their mother approved — a plan to make gardening more palatable. Charles would bring a chair to the garden bed for Ella who in turn would settle herself down comfortably to read aloud to him while he hoed. Often Charles would stop his weeding to ask questions or raise criticism. At first his sister found herself explaining or defending something for which she lacked the full knowledge. Gradually she gave up

these lengthy answers unless she was certain of the material. It was an important lesson and one which would serve Ella well throughout her life.

These changes and accomplishments did not go unnoticed, and when Ella was eleven she was allowed to enter the grammar department of the nearby school which her brother and sister attended. School was immediately intriguing to her, and she took to it quickly. Like her father she had a natural interest and aptitude for math. Soon she was made a monitor and given a desk on the platform next to the teacher's where she taught daily lessons in Colburn's Mental Arithmetic. At dinner one night her father wanted to know why Ella was acting so "priggish." When he was told that she was sitting on the platform teaching, he instructed her to move her desk back to the floor and teach the lessons from there.

Theodore Flagg took an interest in what his youngest daughter was learning in school and often helped her with problems. For example, when she started the study of geometry she did not understand the definition of a line. One evening she told her father that the teacher had defined a line as having length only. Ella informed him that she could not see it and that she had said so in class. Her father then asked her to think in a bee line from where she was to the top of the flagstaff on the courthouse. Through this illustration she discovered the true meaning of a "line" — the path of a moving point. She also began to see the utility of giving examples to illustrate points although she tried not to depend solely on illustration for answers. One morning as she was getting ready for school she told her mother, "Today,

as you know, is public examination day and when somebody asks me 'Why do you invert the divisor in division of fractions?', I can't reply." "What can you do?" asked her mother. "I can show it by going back to one."<sup>13</sup>

Life in Buffalo had been comfortable for the Flaggs. For the most part Mr. Flagg was successful at his trade. At one point during their years in Buffalo he entered into a business venture with a partner of such few scruples that he lost the business. It so affected him that later when he was offered a joint partnership in a firm for which he was manager, he turned it down. His reputation continued to grow and he became known for "his keen, sensitive mind and democratic spirit." His math prowess was sought by men in all sorts of business. According to Ella's recollection he once did a piece of work requiring great mathematical exactitude. After seeing his specifications, the contracting firm became concerned and believed that they should take it apart and examine it for their own security. Mr. Flagg told them to go ahead and to take notes on the calculations, because they would find it exactly as his drawings and estimates indicated. Such was the nature of his work and self-confidence — they found that he was absolutely correct.

#### Move to Chicago

In 1856 and '57 Buffalo's economy declined severely. Circumstances had diminished its trade. Labor saving devices, such as grain elevators, had cut the need for longshoremen; railroads were emptying the warehouses

and taking away winter trade; the only two points of maritime value seemed to be in Chicago and New York City; Buffalo's prosperity had peaked and by 1857 it was experiencing an economic panic.<sup>14</sup> If the future in Buffalo did not look too bright to Theodore Flagg, it must have looked much better in another city along the Great Lakes; in 1858 shortly after Ella's thirteenth birthday, the family moved to Chicago. At that time Chicago was only 28 years old, but it was already well on its way to becoming "the best balanced economic area in the world." In another century it would lead "the nation in manufacturing output" and have "the most diversified industry."<sup>15</sup>

The end of the Indian struggles resulting in the westward expansion of the 1830's, the completion of the Illinois-Michigan Canal in 1848, and the building of numerous railroads in the 1850's helped to cause the rapid growth of the city. The population went from a few hundred in 1833 to 29,963 in 1850 and almost 100,000 in 1860.<sup>16</sup> The location of Chicago made it the center for lumber, food manufacturing, grain exporting, meat processing and railroading. Two years after the Flaggs arrived the city also became involved in an exciting political event. In a recently built shed-like structure called the Wigwam, the Republican National Convention nominated Abraham Lincoln for the Presidency.

Even with all its potential the city faced many health problems in the fifties. Cholera killed five percent of the population in 1854. The new waterworks completed that year to replace the rotten wooden water pipes let dead fish into the system. Those who could afford it bought water at ten cents a barrel. Smallpox epidemics occurred

every year and tuberculosis and infant diseases took a heavy toll. One in every sixty inhabitants died of 'consumption' in 1853. The streets were just two feet above the level of the river and in rainy weather were impassable even for empty wagons!<sup>17</sup>

Yet by the time the Flagg family reached Chicago, the city had made many improvements. There were 159 miles of wooden and brick sidewalks, twenty-seven miles of loose wooden planked streets, four miles of river wharves, ten bridges, street lamps, and a gas works. The shallow Chicago river was dredged for depth and its mud was piled onto the streets so that the difference between street and river level became twelve feet. Gradually the swampland to the West was filled in and sold. Now it was time to renovate the city's twenty year old educational system.

#### Chicago Schools in the 1850's

Illinois had experienced two different types of settlers: poor whites from Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee who settled in the southern part of the state and cared little for schooling; and those from New England and New York who travelled by steamship down the Great Lakes and settled in the Chicago area ready to start schools like those they left. However, the schools' progress was slow, and the cumbersome district organization was a difficult one to transform. Easterners not only controlled schools but they also controlled politics, and in 1839 the union became official when the city charter was amended by a young attorney from Maine named J. Y. Scammon. His plan gave complete

control of the city's schools and school finances to the city council who in turn appointed a Board of Inspectors (after 1857 a Board of Education) to oversee the administrative functions. After 1846 this board even trained the teachers in weekly Saturday morning meetings. In 1853 the city council authorized the appointment of a superintendent to "serve as a kind of secretary to the school inspectors" and "bring order and unity" to the thirty-four teachers and 3,000 children in seven school buildings in the various districts. The following year they agreed on the appointment, and John Dore from Boylston Street Grammar School, Boston, arrived to take up the monumental task. In the two years of his administration he accomplished much: 1) every child's name was recorded somewhere and a daily record was kept on each one; 2) a general examination was given by Dore personally to every child so that he could be classified according to his progress even in ungraded schools; 3) textbooks were unified; 4) he criticized the archaic methods of recitation and memory and lamented the parents' low opinion of and lack of interest in the public schools; 5) he urged the inspectors to open a public high school to provide advanced training and reduce the number of older students in the ungraded rooms.<sup>18</sup>

His successor, William H. Wells, was an Easterner, too. He managed to bring about phenomenal changes in Chicago schools. Wells was born on a Connecticut farm and worked hard to get what formal education he could which consisted of district schools and some academy training. Finally, he received an honorary Master of Arts degree from Dartmouth College. He also taught in similar schools to those he attended, and in 1854 he was asked to head the new Westfield State Normal School in

Massachusetts. Just before he came to Chicago he helped found the American Normal School Association. He was an advocate of Pestalozzian principles and object teaching. He had managed to accomplish much in his 44 years — he was editing a professional journal, had authored a new grammar text (Wells Grammar) which combined the study of grammar with the study of great literature, and had served as the President of the Massachusetts State Teachers Association.<sup>19</sup>

Wells' efforts were felt at all levels of the Chicago schools. At the Saturday morning meetings he told elementary teachers that they were to arouse student interest and direct their energies while providing sympathy and understanding. In other words, he gave them the heart of good Pestalozzian and Froebelian doctrines that were new to the times. He also worked hard at reducing class size, although with such a fast growing city it was very difficult to do. His first year was also the first year of the new high school which opened with 169 boys and girls and provided three courses of study: a four-year classical course for the college bound; a four-year English course of a more practical nature; and a two-year normal course for teacher training. Due to the demand for secondary education, entrance examinations were required of everyone. Students had to be at least 12 years old to take the examination. If they passed, they were admitted to the classical or English courses. One had to be at least sixteen years old to be admitted into the Normal Department. Wells also set about grading the entire system, standardizing the curricula and promoting school building.<sup>20</sup> He would turn out to be the superintendent



who recommended Miss N. Ella Flagg for employment as a teacher and became her personal friend.

### Continuing an Education

Such were conditions in Chicago when the Flaggs settled into the West Side. Having enjoyed her school experiences in Buffalo, Ella was looking forward to entering high school since she had completed the work of the grammar department. She soon learned, however, that she would not be eligible to take the high school entrance examination until she had completed a year in one of the Chicago grammar schools. She entered the highest division of the Brown School. It was a new three story school just opened and contained a four room primary department on the first floor, a four room grammar department on the second floor and an assembly room on the third. It was considered to be one of the best types of schools for that time.

Ella's course of study at the Brown School included the following: Hillard's First Class Reader, Sander's Speller, Well's Grammar, Intellectual Arithmetic in connection with Slate Arithmetic, Davie's School Arithmetic, Warren's Geography, Payson, Dutlon and Scribner's Penmanship, Goodrich's History of the United States, Edward's Outlines of English History, Declamation, Composition and Physical Exercises.<sup>21</sup>

It was a difficult adjustment for Ella to make. Moving to a strange city and going to a strange school is hard enough for anyone, but it was probably worse for her, because it is doubtful that she got much support from her parents. Her father had always treated schools

skeptically. He was seldom entirely satisfied with the work of the schools; after all, he had had little formal schooling himself, but through his own efforts had become a very knowledgeable individual. To him certain subjects such as history were not necessary to take in school, because one could get this knowledge from reading. Her mother had never encouraged her schooling, and it is unlikely that she started now. There is also no evidence that her brother or sister continued their formal education. This situation coupled with the fact that she spent most of her time at Brown listening to the class recite material that she already knew led her to drop out after a few months. She had always liked the school atmosphere though, and during her next year at home she could not seem to abandon the notion of being a part of it.<sup>22</sup>

A fresh opportunity presented itself in 1860 when a young friend invited Ella to attend the examination for teacher certification. Her successful passage of the test presented a dilemma for Superintendent Wells. She was too young to be awarded a certificate. Out of great perplexity he asked her if she would be interested in entering the normal school. His question brought a definite "yes", and she was entered.

At that time the teacher training staff was attempting to bring a system of scholarship and discipline to the schools under the direction of Principal Edward C. Delano. Ella understood this immediately and became a loyal and dedicated supporter of what she later termed its "mechanical methods." It was all new and interesting to her then and made good sense. The normal course of study offered Ella when she was a student included the following:<sup>23</sup>

	First term	Second term	Third term
First year	Arithmetic Map Drawing Political Geography Grammar Algebra; Singing	Same as first term	Physical Geography Natural Philosophy Botany Singing, Drawing
Second year	Natural Philosophy Physiology Bookkeeping ( $\frac{1}{2}$ term) Chemistry Constitution of U.S. Principles of Gov't. Singing, Drawing	History of U.S. and outlines of General History Rhetoric Astronomy English Literature Singing, Drawing Theory of teaching	Arithmetic ( $\frac{1}{2}$ term) Geography Grammar Mencal Philosophy English Literature Singing, Drawing Singing, Drawing Theory of teaching

Ella discussed her work with her father. One evening she was pondering an illustration of a hydraulic press when he asked her to explain its operation. She began and as she continued, she could tell by the irritated look on his face that he was not satisfied. She left the room and overheard her father saying to her mother, "She had a fairly good mind to start with, but if she continues under such teaching, she won't have any mind after awhile." This depressed her very much, but instead of giving up she returned to the press and by carefully studying it step by step she discovered that a piece was missing from the diagram. The next day during an examination, one of the advanced questions pertained to the press. She was the only one to get it right. Afterwards the rest of the students complained saying that it wasn't fair for them to be expected to find mistakes in the text, and Ella realized that it paid to be careful and accurate and to

give attention to every detail in habits of study. The incident reinforced the lesson Charles had taught her in the garden back in Buffalo.

Ella accepted the theory of "Formal Discipline" so popular at the time. It stressed the need for exercising the appropriate "mental faculties" and Wayland's Mental Philosophy was used solely for this purpose. She was not so sure she accepted this latter practice, however. One day she commented to her mother that if the whole object in learning a subject is simply to get discipline out of it, "the subject was not worth much." To this her mother replied that she hoped Ella would have a chance to put her ideas into practice some day.<sup>24</sup>

Jane Flagg was of two minds when it came to schooling and her daughter's future, however, and during the summer vacation between the two years she expressed her concerns and opinions to her daughter. She told Ella that it would be best for her to leave school and abandon any idea of becoming a teacher; that, since she was the youngest and hadn't even attended school herself until she was older, she knew nothing of children; she was too severe with herself for making mistakes, and she would do the same with other children which would be a mistake. Ella loved her mother and never took advice lightly. She thought this over, but she did not give up the idea of teaching. Instead, she devised a plan whereby she would visit primary classes once a week during her last year to find out how she would react and whether she would be interested in teaching children. She asked some of her classmates to go with her, but they all refused. So she went alone. Her first two visits were discouraging: they were made on hot afternoons

and the children looked sleepy and bored. Perhaps her mother was right, but she didn't give up. The third week she tried a school a mile distant to which she ran more than walked. Out of breath she knocked on the door of Miss Rounds class, and explained to the lady that she was a senior at the Normal School but didn't know anything about young children. Miss Rounds then relayed the information to the children who, in turn smiled their welcome.<sup>25</sup>

In describing her experiences with Miss Rounds in this first "reader" room she says, "In the course of an hour, I was conscious that here was a relation between teacher and children, an atmosphere enveloping all, that I had never known in a school. The next week found me again in that wonderful schoolroom. Soon after I entered the third week Miss Rounds asked if I would like to teach a class. From that time a part of every visit was spent in teaching." Toward the end of this last year Mrs. Flagg told her daughter that she had changed her mind and that her objections had been removed. The influence of association with younger children was evident.<sup>26</sup>

Ella graduated from the Normal Department of the high school in the Spring of 1862. She was just seventeen years old, but she had achieved a level of personal growth and independence that few other females of her time had. Her quick, keen, and sensitive mind coupled with her sense of responsibility, determined drive and humble integrity were qualities that would get much exercise throughout the rest of her life. She had overcome many obstacles in her short life and the Flaggs — as modest as they were — must have realized then that she was a special,

unique individual. Whether they approved of the independent path she was taking is not known.

In the fall of 1862, she started her long career as a professional educator. She had been teaching only two weeks to the day when her mother died. The pain of losing the person to whom she was so attached must have been very severe, but as far as the record shows Ella never talked about her mother's death.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Helen C. Bennett, American Women in Civic Work (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1915), pp. 255-57. For biographical accounts of her life see John T. McManis, Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1916), pp. 15-211; Joseph Reim, "The Contributions to Education of Ella Flagg Young" (M.E. thesis, Chicago Teachers College, 1940), pp. 1-21; Rosemary Donatelli, "The Contributions of Ella Flagg Young to the Educational Enterprise" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, Microfilms, T22517, 1971), pp. 64-79. For brief sketches see Dictionary of American Biography 1936 ed., s.v. "Ella Flagg Young", by Charles H. Judd; Notable American Women, 1972 ed., s.v. "Young, Ella Flagg," by Judy Suratt; "Necrology," Addresses and Proceedings of the Fifty-Sixth Annual Meeting Held at Pittsburgh (Washington D.C.: National Education Association, 1918), p. 685; Franklin W. Scott, The Semi-Centennial Record of the University of Illinois (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1918), p. 834, H47.

<sup>2</sup>McManis, pp. 224-25.

<sup>3</sup>University of Illinois, Honorary Graduate's Record Information Sheet, University of Illinois Alumni Record Office, 1912, Urbana, 3 pages.

<sup>4</sup>McManis, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup>George W. Clayton and Sanford B. Hung, The Manufacturing Interests of the City of Buffalo with Notices of Its Principal Manufacturing Establishments, 2nd ed. (Buffalo: C. F. S. Thomas Publishers, 1866), pp. 1-17.

<sup>6</sup>McManis, pp. 15.

<sup>7</sup>Concerning allergic reactions there is a bit of evidence that she may have occasionally suffered from rashes. This was the case during her Presidency at the 1911 N.E.A. Convention. The only time an over-all body rash cleared, was while she was conducting the meeting and delivering her address. See Margaret A. Haley Papers. Unpublished autobiography, Version IV, 1934-35, pp. 94-5. In Chicago Teachers Federation File, Boxes 32-34, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>8</sup>McManis, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>14</sup>Clayton and Hunt, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>Colliers Encyclopedia, 1960 ed. s.v. "Chicago" by Natalia M. Belting, Edward G. Strable, and Peter Miscinski, p. 208. For accounts of early Chicago see Emmett Dedmon, Fabulous Chicago (New York: Random House, 1953), pp. 3-95; Dorsha B. Hayes, Chicago (New York: Julian Nessner, Inc., 1944), pp. 3-167; Joseph Kirkland, The Story of Chicago (Chicago: Dibble Publishing Co., 1892), pp. 1-287. For an early account of public education in Chicago see John W. Cook, Educational History of Illinois (Chicago: Henry O. Shepard Co., 1912), pp. 456-94.

<sup>16</sup>Hildegarde Romberg, "The Origin and Development of the Public Elementary Schools in Chicago" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1935), p. 10; Kirkland, pp. 153; 255, 274, 403.

<sup>17</sup>Mary J. Herrick, The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc., 1971), pp. 35-36.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-40.

<sup>20</sup>Department of Public Instruction, City of Chicago. Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending December 31, 1862 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1863), p. 75. There is no birth record for N. Ella Flagg. The N. was a part of her name but never used by her. See McManis, p. 47. See also Ninth Annual Report, p. 76.

<sup>21</sup>Romberg, p. 155.

<sup>22</sup>McManis, pp. 25-38.

<sup>23</sup>Romberg, p. 127.

<sup>24</sup>McManis, pp. 25-26.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER 2

## THE BEGINNING OF A CAREER

The year 1862 was one of tension and hostility throughout the country. The nation was at war with itself and conditions were changing rapidly. The underground railroad was bringing more and more Negroes to Chicago. Tensions were building between the newly arrived Negroes and the Irish immigrants. Politics suffered under such pressures, so that by 1863 the city council had passed the Black School Law which required all black children to attend segregated black schools. By 1865 counter pressures from the exslaves caused the ordinance to be repealed. There were changes in the ratio of women to men teachers: sixteen to one in 1871, whereas in 1854 it had been five to one. This female dominance coupled with postwar inflation kept the salary scale so low that even after the war men were reluctant to enter such a poorly paid profession. Since few men did enter during this time, however, invariably they were able to expect and receive from two to four times more pay than their female counterparts. In 1862 the average salary for a starting primary teacher was from \$250 to \$300 a year.<sup>1</sup> Miss Ella Flagg, age seventeen-and-a-half, fit into this pay category.

## Teaching

Ella was assigned to the primary department of Foster School by Superintendent Wells. Foster was a ghetto school employing seventeen teachers and serving approximately 1,300 children. The beginning teacher

immersed herself in work.<sup>2</sup> She devised a plan for disposing of her time outside of school: Three nights a week she spent studying, another three were set aside for social activities which included meeting people in her community; Sunday evening was devoted to church.

Following the advice of her father she started with the study of history. Beginning with David Hume's works she progressed through European and American history — ancient to modern. Each of her study nights she would orally review what she had learned the night before and then proceed to the next lesson. In this way she also acquired a large library which later she allowed students to borrow.

Once a month, on Saturday mornings, she attended the teacher training sessions conducted by Superintendent Wells. These classes were designed to instruct teachers in some of the latest methods. At this time the Object-Lesson Plan (oral instruction) was popular for teaching elementary science in the schools. An outgrowth of Pestalozzian theory and popularized in this country by Edward Sheldon of Oswego, New York, this method consisted of organizing study around the sensory investigation and oral description of actual objects.<sup>3</sup> Students would be asked to identify and examine — through the use of their senses — something such as sand. Then, a list of its physical, biological, chemical and/or mechanical properties would be placed on a slate or blackboard. Thus, knowledge from all scientific disciplines was brought together with reference to a particular object in hopes of providing greater understanding and better concept formation for each student. During her first year of teaching, Ella wrote out all the knowledge involved in this oral "object" course throughout all ten

school divisions. She found her earlier experience with her father's occupation of great use to her in this work which amounted to writing a science curriculum for grades one through nine.

In practice Ella decided that the object lesson did not work very well. "It turned out to be a series of language lessons committed to memory by the children from books...bottled science...because of the materials used to illustrate the course."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it did try to provide a more practical and less academic training to the students. Subjects of utility, physical mobility and manual arts were just starting to creep into the elementary curricula enhancing the old "three R's" content. Even if the "Oswego method" was not a great success, the young teacher seemed to understand what Superintendent Wells and this "new" education were trying to do - i.e., to provide instruction that would be of value to students from all social classes and not just the "professional." Wells had just completed his ten-graded scheme of unification one year earlier and was attempting to familiarize all his teachers with the plan. The ten grades were reversed from contemporary organizations. In other words, grade ten was the lowest primary grade, and one was the highest grammar grade. Both the primary and the grammar departments contained five grades each. The actual course outline, with the time allotted to complete each grade looked as follows:<sup>5</sup>

Wells Course of Study	
Primary - 10th through 6th grades: 6-9 months to complete each grade.	Grammar - 5th through 1st grades: 1 year to complete each grade.
Oral Instruction Reading, Spelling Arithmetic Drawing Printing to script - grade 6 Physical Exercises Music once/week	Oral lessons from geography history and in grade 5 to astronomy in grade 1. U.S. History (grades 2-1) Colburn's Arithmetic Reading and Grammar Drawing - Map Physical Exercise Moral Instruction Music once/week

Miss Flagg ended up having experience in both the primary and the grammar departments at Foster. After her first six weeks she accepted an upper grade class known unaffectionately as the "cowboy class," because most of the boys spent their outside hours "herding" the cattle that belonged to farmers who lived in the area, but on the outskirts of the town. All the teachers in the building advised her against taking it, because many of the boys were older and much larger than the young five foot tall teacher, and also because they had the reputation of being "discipline problems." The advice, though well-meaning, went unheeded; she had made up her mind. She took the class. As it turned out she and the class "took to" each other. She treated them kindly, frankly and openly with no condescension or stiltedness, so that it became a good class by any standards. She resorted to rough treatment only once, and the recipient seemed to benefit from it. The students generally seemed to be favorably impressed with her work. As was her

custom, she would stay until dark every night to finish up the work of the day and prepare for the next. One night a boy who had been known to give her some trouble stayed after the others left. Upon discovering her custom he began pleading with her not to stay so late and then have to walk alone in such a terrible neighborhood. She thanked him for his concern, but the protests went unheeded, for she was not afraid of the neighborhood.<sup>6</sup>

The following fall, 1863, Miss Flagg was transferred to the Brown school as head assistant with a salary of about \$500 a year.<sup>7</sup> It must have brought mixed feelings to her to think that just five years earlier she had dropped out of the top division of the grammar department. This time, however, her experience at the Brown was different, for the two years that she spent there as head assistant were very satisfactory. Here she continued to teach, observe and learn with the same zeal and drive that she always had. In her class there were fifty-six pupils with a ninety-four percent average attendance.<sup>8</sup> She continued to try to improve on the implementation of Wells' course. As head assistant she had an opportunity to see what others were doing in classes as part of her study in managing schools. What she discovered was that every class was conducted in a manner commensurate with that teacher's intelligence, training and sympathy. In some cases this was a fortunate situation, but in most instances the need for more and improved teacher training was very apparent to her. Thus, her two years at Brown launched another one of her life-long interests - improving teacher preparation.

Plate 1

Top photograph is of Ella Flagg Young when she began teaching (1862).

The bottom one is of her while Principal of the Practice School

(c. 1868).

From: John T. McManis, Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1916) following p. 30.



## Supervising Practice Teachers

Others, too, were aware of the need for a better teacher training course. One of the biggest voids in the curricula of the city normal department was its lack of a practice school. Ella had made her own with Miss Rounds but most other prospective teachers did not bother. Even as early as 1855 Superintendent Dore had recommended that the Board of Inspectors open a "model school" where theory could be put to practice.<sup>9</sup> No practical experience was provided by the board, however, until 1865 when Superintendent Pickard explained in his first annual report the reasons for opening such a school. His interest and experience in teacher training programs were not new. He came to Chicago from Wisconsin where, during his term as state superintendent of education, he had been instrumental in creating the state normal school. Model schools had been successful, and most normal schools had them.<sup>10</sup>

Superintendent Pickard, however, envisioned something that might prove even more useful for practical experience — practice teaching in "regular" rather than "model" classrooms. Most model schools were not the same in character as actual classes, because the pupils were usually from the more affluent social classes whose parents could afford the tuition. Pickard said they were also better behaved so that instruction and discipline were made uniform and relatively easy. Consequently, the teacher candidate did not need to cultivate the "arts of tact and patience." In Chicago it could be different, because there was a regular grammar school very close to the high school. Pickard thought



it would be ideal for their purposes, and the board heartily endorsed his plan.<sup>11</sup>

Sometime in the fall of 1865 two rooms were set aside for practice in the Scammon school, and Miss N. Ella Flagg was placed in charge of these.<sup>12</sup> Her official title was training teacher or principal of the practice school. To prepare herself for such work, and with her usual zeal and dedication, she asked and received permission from the board of education to visit the Oswego Normal School under Edward Sheldon in New York. Here, it was commonly acknowledged in educational circles, elementary science had been organized into "object lessons" more fully than anywhere else.

Unfortunately, the trip was not very fruitful; visitation restrictions at the school interfered with her purposes, and she left knowing no more about the method than when she arrived. Instead of becoming discouraged, however, upon her return she went to work using her own resources and outlined a plan and method to be used for preparing the students to teach. After all she had three years of teaching experience, including one in a most "difficult" class; she had carefully studied and outlined all that Wells had given them on object teaching, and she had even made her own practice school during her normal years. Ambitious and determined, she was definitely up to the demands of the occasion.

The two rooms - one seventh and one sixth (third and fourth grades today) - were placed under her supervision. The senior normal class handled the actual discipline and instruction with each member having charge for two weeks during the year. Utilizing knowledge based on all the work she had earlier put into oral instruction, Ella gave

demonstrations on how to use this method so that the whole senior class could observe. Observation and practice, then, became the pattern of work that she established.

At first some parents and board members feared children would suffer with so many inexperienced teachers who changed every two weeks, but these fears turned out to be unwarranted. There were only one or two cases of "marked disobedience" and the pupils excelled over any other schools in achievement progress that first year. Pickard said of the first year,

the experiment, for such it was felt to be, has proved more than successful, and the wisdom of the board in the selection of a teacher has been fully established. The hearty cooperation of the principal of the Scammon School merits commendation...The work of oral instruction in these two grades may be in part committed to some Normal student who shows special fitness for this work and some time of the training teacher be given to the oral instruction of one or two other grades, so that the school of observation may be extended into the work of other grades.<sup>13</sup>

It is not clear whether the practice rooms were expanded to more than two or not. What is clear, however, is that the talents and abilities of Miss Flagg were appreciated and rewarded: her salary for the following year was to be \$1,100 which was about \$100 more than the previous year.<sup>14</sup> The glowing reports continued for the next two years. By the end of the 1866-67 school year the president of the board of education stated that "the Training Department, inaugurated some ten years ago, has been steadily growing in excellence and value since that time, and is now an indispensable part of the Normal School."<sup>15</sup>

He continues by saying that "the benefits flowing from the School of Practice have been plainly observable during the year. The graduating class of 1866 have, with the exception of one who was physically unable to teach, found employment, and success has uniformly attended them. Their drill in the school of practice has had a marked influence upon their teaching."<sup>16</sup>

Ella worked closely with both the principal of the high school, Mr. George Howland, and the principal of the Normal Department, Edward C. Delano, but especially the latter as indicated by Superintendent Pickard's report in 1868:

"The success of the school of practice is established beyond question. Our schools owe more to this agency than to any other - I am tempted to say all others....An assistant teacher should be provided Mr. Delano, that he may find a little more time to give to the school of practice; and that Miss Flagg may be relieved from the necessity of hearing recitations in the Normal School, in addition to her duties in the school of practice, of themselves arduous enough. I feel that I should urge the appointment of an additional teacher, because our necessities enjoin upon us the enlargement of the school in numbers."<sup>17</sup>

From all indications, Ella was basically pleased with the work of the practice school. There were, of course, some teacher candidates who did not really seem to be cut out for teaching, but they all improved, and lack of ability in her students did not seem to be much of a problem for the twentieth-three year old principal - at least not yet. With the emphasis on new methods and better teaching practices the Saturday meetings assumed added importance. For some teachers these were the only link they had to formal preparation. Ella became an instructor in these "institutes" and in the year 1868 she gave two

lectures: one on "The Human Body-Parts and Uses;" and the other on "Common Objects."

Professionally, the young principal was enjoying success, but personally, for Ella, the year 1868 was a tumultuous one. Her brother, Charles, had fought in many of the battles in the Civil War and had returned uninjured. This particular year, however, he was travelling by train when an accident occurred which resulted in his death only - a great tragedy to the three remaining Flaggs.

By December of that same year, Ella was planning to be married. Little is known of the circumstances surrounding this marriage or the prospective bridegroom, William Young. He was a merchant in the town and had been a friend of the family's since their arrival in 1858. He was a good deal older than the young lady, and his health was not the best. (Perhaps he suffered from some kind of respiratory condition, because he later went West to recuperate.)<sup>18</sup> It is pure speculation as to what her father thought of his youngest daughter marrying an older man in precarious health, but he probably did not strenuously object. Ella was not in the habit of crossing her father's firm convictions. At any rate, they were married on December 28, and she returned to her job after Christmas vacation.<sup>19</sup>

Her work continued, but it was clear that the practice school could not make great teachers from students who lacked ability in the art of teaching. The superintendent spoke to this issue in 1869:

The [practice] school has maintained its standing, and has given additional proof of its great value to our work. Not one who has passed successfully through this school has failed in the regular work of the schools when assigned to duty after graduation. It is not to be expected

that all should exhibit equal power as the result of training, for the school does not create, it simply develops talent. It affords means for the cultivation of whatever power the pupil-teacher possesses.<sup>20</sup>

Also, during the previous year, there had been a court battle over the treatment of a student by a school employee. Corporal punishment was the issue. The school system had been put on the defensive, and everyone concerned was ready to raise the standards of prospective teachers and school officials.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of pressure for better qualified teachers and a growing demand for greater availability of high school courses, several grammar schools throughout the city added a first-year high school course by the fall of 1869. In the summer of 1870 the superintendent recommended that future teachers be chosen only from high school classes instead of the grammar graduates.<sup>22</sup> Another innovation was operating during the 1869-70 school year: a normal primary building was erected to house the normal department and the school of practice. Eight rooms of the new building — the first and second floors — were devoted to the latter. The senior class, under the supervision of Mrs. Young, then taught the primary pupils at an enormous saving to the board of education.<sup>23</sup>

#### Political Difficulties

These measures did not solve the problem of training untalented student teachers, especially if the latter had political pull with the board of education. Mr. Delano and Mrs. Young agreed that a particular "untalented" student should not continue in the program and asked the

student to drop out. The repercussions that followed for Ella resulted in her resignation as principal on February 7, 1871.<sup>24</sup>

The board felt that the Committee on the Examination of Teachers should be responsible for removing unpromising students and not the principals. Although Superintendent Pickard supported Ella, the board did not. She realized how hampered she was becoming in her work and thought it best that she transfer out. Pickard placed her in the Haven School as a high school math teacher, at a salary reduction of \$200, with the understanding that she would return to the normal school when an occasion arose and a Miss Carolyn Wygant took her place. In the meantime, in order to maintain more direct control, the board passed a resolution stating that a committee of three board members be appointed as a Committee on the Normal School; that the Normal School be made independent; that the primary practice rooms be moved back to the Scammon; and that in selecting the practice teachers the following order of priority be observed when possible: 1) members of the Normal senior class; 2) members of a special class who are graduates of the high school; 3) members of special class who have been connected to the public schools; 4) members of a special class who have never attended Chicago schools.<sup>25</sup>

While Mrs. Young was at the Haven School, disaster struck the center of Chicago. On the evening of October eighth and all through the ninth the city of 300,000 people burned wiping out 98,000 homes, one-third (fifteen) of the school buildings, and destroying a total of \$200,000,000 worth of property. The schools suffered severely; those buildings remaining were used to house the homeless and school

operations were practically suspended until the following fall when slowly the wheels of education began to turn. It would be nearly a decade before facilities and operations would be back to par.<sup>26</sup>

In the fall of 1872, Ella returned to work at the Normal, this time both in the capacity of math teacher and assistant to Miss Wygant. Another ruling passed in 1873 gave power to remove any pupils who did not show promise to the Committees on the Normal School and on examinations combined. The board had succeeded in wedging itself into a position that would not allow a student to be dismissed without their approval. In the same year (1873) another assistant was added at the same salary as Mrs. Young — \$1000/year. By 1874 both assistants were making \$1100/year (back to where she had been three years earlier). Miss Wygant was now making \$1300.

Another occurrence in 1874 affected the Normal School: three two-year "division" high schools opened, and all academic Normal School work was transferred to them. Now all the Normal did was to actually train the students for teaching. By 1875 all normal candidates had to be graduates of the two-year high school. The Normal course was relegated to one year. It was losing in importance. (By 1877 it would be closed, supposedly due to a surplus of teachers and shortage of funds. Prospective teachers would then be four-year high school graduates who as cadets would be placed on probation in the schools upon completion of a teachers' examination. Once they could demonstrate their ability to manage a class their cadetship was over, and they were hired.)<sup>27</sup>

The struggles that Ella experienced in the seventies were not confined to her professional life. Once again death intervened, this time to sever all family ties. In 1873 her husband died and shortly thereafter both her sister and father succumbed to pneumonia. All she really had left was her work. It was about to take an upward turn.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Mary J. Herrick, The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc., 1971), pp. 47-53. For Civil War conditions see Stephen Longstreet Chicago: 1860-1919 (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1973), pp. 37-44; Joseph Kirkland, The Story of Chicago (Chicago: Dibble Publishing Co., 1892), pp. 224-25.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending December 31, 1862 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1863), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>Hildegarde Romberg, "The Origin and Development of the Public Elementary Schools in Chicago" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1935), p. 153.

<sup>4</sup>John T. McManis, Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1916), p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 35-41.

<sup>7</sup>Eleventh Annual Report, p. 62. Her annual salary became \$700 in 1863. See Twelfth Annual Report, p. 122. In 1864 another head assistant was added at the same salary. Teachers' annual salaries were \$600; the male principal's annual salary was \$1700.

<sup>8</sup>Eleventh Annual Report, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup>Second Annual Report cited by Mary Agnes Riley, "A History of the Chicago Normal School: 1856-1906" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1914), pp. 18-19.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.* In the summer of 1864 Superintendent Wells resigned because of failing eyesight and entered the insurance business. He was then appointed to the board of education by the city council. Josiah L. Pickard was elected to fill the vacancy in the superintendency. See Herrick, pp. 44-46.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>McManis, p. 47; Ninth Annual Report, p. 75.

<sup>13</sup>McManis, pp. 47-48.

<sup>14</sup>Thirteenth Annual Report, p. 204. The high school principal's annual salary was \$2400; the Normal School Principal's salary was \$2200. Miss Flagg's address is given as 231 W. Washington Street (p. 249).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 162-163.

<sup>17</sup> Fourteenth Annual Report, p. 184.

<sup>18</sup> Due to the Chicago fire, records are not available prior to October, 1871. Although Mr. Young died in 1873 his will is not filed in Chicago; where he died in the west is unknown.

<sup>19</sup> University of Illinois, Honorary Graduate's Record Information Sheet, University of Illinois Alumni Record Office, 1912, Urbana, 3 pages. Subsequent citations to this reference will appear as Honorary Graduate's Record, University of Illinois. See also Franklin W. Scott, ed., Semi-Centennial Record of the University of Illinois (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1918), p. 834.

<sup>20</sup> Fifteenth Annual Report, p. 196. Ella Flagg Young's annual salary is \$1200; high school principal Howland's is \$2500 (p. 203).

<sup>21</sup> Fifteenth Annual Report.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. See also the Sixteenth Annual Report, p. 103.

<sup>23</sup> McManis, p. 50.

<sup>24</sup> Seventeenth Annual Report, pp. 71-72.

<sup>25</sup> McManis, pp. 53-4.

<sup>26</sup> Herrick, pp. 54-5 citing the Eighteenth Annual Report.

<sup>27</sup> Twenty-First Annual Report, p. 150; Twenty-Third Annual Report, pp. 23; 161. See also Romberg, pp. 128-29.

## CHAPTER 3

## BECOMING AN ADMINISTRATOR

In 1876 a year before the Normal and practice rooms were closed, Ella Young was elected principal of the Scammon School. The Scammon School consisted of two buildings: the older brick two-story built in 1846; and the newer two-story frame built in 1862. Together they contained 643 seats.<sup>1</sup> While the school was very familiar to her from her days as practice school principal, certain changes had occurred - especially curricular.

Since the fire, school administrators had busily tried to replace the lost curriculum records and plans. In 1875 a new curriculum, and a new graded system emerged. The earlier ten-grade system was replaced by an eight-grade organization with the first grade corresponding to first grades today. More practical courses were included such as conduct (politeness, truthfulness, "chaste" language, obedience to parents, etc.), health education, and drawing, with the study of music and German being optional. Geography was introduced in the fourth grade and history in the seventh. Over the next few years, the mass of subjects was consolidated across all grade levels under the general topics of Language, Mathematics, Drawing, Music Miscellaneous, and Physical Exercises.<sup>2</sup>

## Success at Scammon

From the little information available about her principalship at the Scammon, one concludes, though not surprisingly, that Ella was a good

administrator. She took to it as she had to everything else she had tried.

When she left the Scammon, it was to the disappointment of many there, for she was well-liked. One little girl of about ten years of age was particularly sad as she recalled in later years:

Our principal, Ella Flagg Young, gave me a tortoise-shell-handled penknife as a present for making two grades in one year. I prized the knife greatly and kept it until I had grown up. I always call her our principal in speaking of my school days for I loved her dearly then and still love her. I wish you could see her as she stands before me in my mind's eyes; a little bit of a woman, about five feet tall, all vim, push, and go-ahead. My, how she would make those boys fly; she with her jet black hair parted in the middle, combed back smooth, and her clean olive skin and even, white teeth. She always dressed in black, very plain. And her eyes, such eyes that looked you through and through. When she was transferred to the Skinner School I asked her if she would allow me to go there without a permit from the board of education, but she told me she could not, and as my mother was always too busy to go and I was not old enough to know how to go for myself, I consequently lost all interest in the school when we lost our beloved principal, and I quit after going all those interesting years. I lost my beautiful little knife, too, the only thing I had to remember our principal by, except her picture engraved in my heart, which will last forever.<sup>3</sup>

#### Tight Money and Politics

In general, Chicago school conditions were not particularly good. An extended depression between 1873 and 1879 reached its peak in 1877. During this period, and until as late as 1881, teachers and administrators were paid in scrip (temporary paper currency with the promise to pay later). These monthly pay warrants were usually cashed in by the local merchants at a discounted rate. Most teachers were forced to suffer a

loss (13 percent on the average) during this period. Mrs. Young was no exception.<sup>4</sup>

In 1876 the board of education took action which led to Superintendent Pickard's leaving. The board demoted his two assistants without his permission and put in their place a man from Detroit named Duane Doty. Mrs. Young, a close friend of Pickard's, felt that Doty made life miserable for the superintendent. In 1877 he resigned going to the University of Iowa where he later became president.<sup>5</sup> Within two weeks Doty was named Superintendent to the misfortune of all involved, for he proved to be incompetent. When the board dismissed him two years later, he became an agent in Pullman's "Model city" in Chicago.<sup>6</sup>

#### Move to Skinner School

Doty's lack of administrative talent did not prevent Ella's promotion. The good job that she was doing at the Scammon did not go unnoticed. At the end of the 1879 school year she was asked to become head of Skinner, a much larger school. In fact, the Skinner School was one of the three largest in the city. It was a four-story brick building erected in 1859 with 23 rooms. Located on the West side, it served an upper class of people like the Harrison family - Carter Harrison, Sr., was Mayor then and his son would be later - as well as a lower class Italian group whose children had reputations of being roudy, uncouth and uncontrollable in school.<sup>7</sup>

Mrs. Young did not immediately accept the offer. She visited the district many times, carefully going over it from one end to the other, until she was familiar with the people and the needs of the community that were to be met by the school. Finally, she decided to accept the principalship.

There was, however, something about the principalship appointment system which bothered Ella -- it had to do with being a woman. There were nearly 1,000 women teachers in the schools: half of the high school teaching positions were held by women; and half of the elementary principalships were held by women. It was customary for the women principals to hold their jobs without passing the certifying examination that men principals did. Ella prided herself on being able to earn any attainment given to her, and she most definitely did not care for special treatment because of sex. Therefore, at the first opportunity she took the examination, coming out at the top of the list in scores.

While Ella was at Skinner, the school was known for employing the best techniques available in educational procedure. Mayor Carter Harrison, Sr. remarked that he thought it was the "most effective social institution in the city."<sup>8</sup> She adamantly opposed corporal punishment and sent memos to her teachers from time to time reminding them of this. She gave her teachers extensive flexibility to devise their own approaches and methods in conducting their classes. She was fond of saying, "No one can work in another's harness." On the other hand she accepted no excuses for poor teaching; she expected her staff to excel in their work. One measure of effectiveness was whether or not the students stayed in school. Ella made her teachers feel responsible for

reaching the students so that they would not drop out. She, herself, followed up on students and kept in touch with parents to assure the students' continued participation in school until they could be productive to society.<sup>9</sup>

One story is told about Ella's experiences at Skinner, however, that indicates she was not always successful in keeping the students in school. After some sort of encounter she told one of the boys to go home and not return without his parents. That is just what he did — he went home and never returned with or without his parents. The boy was William Hale Thompson — Mayor during her last year in the office of superintendency. Some said he never forgave her.<sup>10</sup>

Ella welcomed and encouraged parents and other visitors to the school, and they came from within and without the city. The common practical subjects of the day were visible in her school, but she also stressed the academic subjects. She wanted them taught meaningfully to the student: rote memory work was not learning to her.

Arithmetic — especially mental work — continued to interest her, and she was fond of stepping into a room, gaining the students' attention for a minute, asking one or two questions pertaining to their grade level, receiving a quick answer and then stepping out. In the seventh and eighth grades, Skinner was one of the first to departmentalize. Ella taught eighth grade grammar, since she was involved in studying it herself. The history teacher in the upper grades had devised techniques that were considered highly innovative for the time. In teaching the U.S. Constitution a miniature house of Congress was constructed. The children debated issues and often brought in resource

people from the community. Ella also established a small resource library for their study. School libraries were rare then and she had bought books from money provided by fundraising projects and the donations of Judge Skinner whose name the school carried.<sup>11</sup>

#### Beginnings of the "Ella Flagg Young Club"

Students of the Skinner School did not have much homework. Ella Young felt that they needed the teacher's guidance. Evening study for her, personally, on the other hand, had become a regular feature of life, and she spread this habit to her teaching staff. Since 1880-81 George Howland had been superintendent. Ella knew him well from her Normal (practice school) days — he had been principal of the high school then — and knew how much he stressed the academic side of education. This emphasis did not change when he became the head of the city's schools. He continued to emphasize scholarship and literary excellence which led to Ella's own study of the classics; but this time she did not pursue it alone. Instead, she formed a "club" among her staff.

At first, she and the teachers met every two weeks at the school, but they soon moved to her home. It was an informal seminar situation in which they studied and discussed freely. English grammar was the first content area that was dealt with, but soon they moved to Shakespeare, Greek drama, modern drama and other forms of literature. Teachers of the Skinner continued meeting long after Ella left the principalship: their study widened to include psychology, ethics and philosophy.<sup>12</sup>



### The Way She Was

Ella was dedicated to her work and had high expectations of her colleagues and students, but she was not an overly strict taskmaster. The Skinner teachers remembered her very positively. One later said:

It is very rare, I think that one finds a woman who will do as much for other women as Mrs. Young did for her teachers. Ever mindful of our comfort and pleasure, she suggested that we spend an evening once in two weeks at her home for our club instead of the schoolroom, giving us an opportunity to go home, shake the dust of the schoolroom from our clothes, and feel freshened for our evening's work.

In appearance, when I first knew her, Mrs. Young was slight, dignified, of a rather grave countenance, wearing a black dress with white linen collar and cuffs, her black hair brushed smoothly down her face, making quite a striking appearance. Her manner was courteous and pleasing and she soon won the respect of her pupils. Although her expression was somewhat severe when in repose, when she talked and became interested in the explanation of a lesson, her face lighted up and became very fascinating and almost beautiful.<sup>13</sup>

With students, too, she was encouraging, taking time she might have spent in relaxation to offer a helpful word. In the fall of 1881, a former pupil of the Skinner moved to a northern suburb. She contemplated traveling into Chicago so that she would not have to change schools, but her parents decided that the neighborhood school would be best. Disappointed, she wrote to her favorite principal off and on during the school year. This is how Mrs. Young sounded in her replies:

My Dear Minnie,

...In my mind there are no doubts regarding the wisdom that places you in a school near home instead of sending you to Chicago, daily. I sincerely hope that you are still striving to do your best.

You, probably, find less pressure brought to bear upon the pupils than you felt in the Grammar School. I am confident

that I shall not be disappointed in you and learn from you at some future time that you had not made the most, possible out of your advanced studies. It has been my experience to find promising pupils changed to laggards in the higher schools. I say that I am confident that you will do your best, and yet at the same time I cannot refrain from giving you a word of advice. You were always a comfort in my recitations because your heart was in your work.

Do not change — that is my advice. I trust that you will develop into an earnest young woman with her heart always in her work...If ever I can be of any assistance to you do not hesitate to call me for either advice or information... I was talking...[with a friend] about your class...she said, to my surprise, 'Evidently you are fond of Minnie Barrett.'

Now Minnie you must not disappoint me.....Your letters are a source of pleasure and comfort to me....I am glad you remember English Grammar lessons at the Skinner with pleasure...I have had a genuine treat in the shape of an advance grammar class, consisting of about three-fourths of the Skinner teachers. We have done hard work but that has not made it less enjoyable. I should have liked to give you such a course, for I know you would have been equal to it... there have been very decided differences in opinion at times; I never object to such if they have ground for support, as thought is always developed by healthy opposition.....The older you grow the more and more you'll realize that the dreaded event rarely comes to us; the great joys and the great sorrows come unexpectedly. I am very sorry your teacher in Natural Philosophy finds it necessary to go so rapidly; possibly the subject is to be reviewed later in the course.

When do you begin German? I remember that you did well in that. To my mind, it furnishes the most entertaining stories of any modern language.

My regards to your parents.

Sincerely yours  
Ella F. Young<sup>14</sup>

Ella had found it easy to trust people, and that trust was not usually misplaced. Her staff and students rallied under it; she was extending her faith and confidence to others; she was becoming a good leader to her staff, because she expected and could stimulate the best from those who worked under her. The frankness she encouraged did not

lead to hostility, it led to learning. There was no coercion or threat in her management.

### Friendships

Ella maintained a long and lasting friendship with William H. Wells and his family. He had been active in establishing the Chicago Public Library and Ella had been involved in this work. In 1885 Wells died. Those who had taught under his superintendency paid special tribute to him. Ella continued to visit the family after his death, maintaining a lasting friendship with his daughter Dora. To a friend later, Dora recalled:

Mrs. Young always anticipated what was to come and was planning long before hand on how best to meet it. While she was piercingly direct in her remarks she was also discrete. She never gave way to a display of temper. She couldn't be used, and she immediately saw through schemes of politicians.<sup>15</sup>

Another lasting friendship started during her years at the Skinner. Laura Brayton, a graduate of the Chicago High School, started her teaching career at Skinner in 1883, four years after Ella had accepted the principalship. Their friendship grew over the years to the point that they not only roomed together, but during her years as superintendent, Laura became her personal secretary.<sup>16</sup>

### Professional Development

By 1887 Ella had become actively involved in the Principals' division of the NEA. Even though women were not allowed to sit on the convention

floor or vote, they were allowed on stage, and she delivered her first paper at the 1887 convention in Chicago. Her topic was "How to Teach Parents to Discriminate between Good and Bad Teaching." Her experiences over the last twenty-five years were captured in the presentation. She had sound advice to give, and she was also anticipating by seven years many things Joseph Mayer Rice would say. In her description of teachers and schools she indicated many practices which Rice, in a series of articles in the Forum in 1893, would turn into an expose.

Undoubtedly, the day has passed when even a respectable minority of the parents can be induced to become regular visitors at the school. Among teachers, however, an aversion to visiting does not prevail. The desire to inspect each other's work amounts almost to a mania. The report that A has a new scheme of education, or a new device for securing excellence in a particular subject, attracts swarms of fellow-teachers to visit A's school, just as the odors of the fragrant flowers attract swarms of busy bees to sip the honey. And yet, enterprising as teachers are in this matter, there is general complaint of weariness and headache after a half-day spent in observation of another's work. In the cities and towns, superintendents walk, or race through the schools, their faithful attention to duty being most noticeable in the promptness with which they depart at the close of the time allotted for the visit. In the country, superintendents do not find time to traverse their districts very often, so averaging in the year, about as much time in their few schools, as the swift-footed city superintendents average in their many schools. School trustees and members of the boards of education spend but little time observing the instruction given by the teachers. Gentlemen who are interested in the subject of education accept positions as school directors, intending to make their influence felt in the correction of existing evils. They soon are ready with reasons why they cannot visit, and so they join that staff of school officials from which emanates the continually increasing demand upon teachers and pupils. This cursory review of the attitude of school directors, superintendents, and teachers is made in support of the statement that the day has passed when even a small minority of the public at large can be induced to become regular, or frequent visitors at the school....

Then must the inference be drawn that this subject is simply theoretical? No, the subject is a very practical one, but there are attendant upon it those difficulties and far-stretching demands that make this phase of our professional life akin to the religious life. It is comparatively easy to formulate religious belief, and to tell the multitude which are the essential and which are the nonessential articles. A very different thing is it to show by one's life, and by one's influence over others' lives, what is the real essence of the doctrine we advocate. So, in this matter of teaching discrimination to others, we must first get on a plane of high thought and then act in accordance with the results of clear thinking. We must arrive at a definite conception of the value of what we are trying to accomplish in the school-room; its value as an aid to mental training, or as an addition to the pupil's fund of information. Wearying the mind by memorizing useless facts, and dulling the brain by useless drudgery are too common features of much of the work performed by both teachers and pupils. It will not help us, it will not take the responsibility from us, to say that we would gladly abolish the dull routine, but the powers above us have established the course of study....

Having made certain that our aims and methods are such as will give results that will satisfactorily appeal to the experience and judgment of men and women, we should make persistent efforts to draw the parents occasionally to the school, on other than festive days, and singly, or in small numbers. Formal invitations are not necessary. Verbal messages may be sent by the children. If the young folks are interested, they will see that these invitations are accepted; for, as we all know, the American parent is in a fair state of subjection to the child....

Public attention to methods of instructions and plans of education may be further secured by occasional lectures on educational topics. Unfortunately, most lectures of this kind are aimed at the destruction of others and the elevation of self, rather than the genuine enlightenment of the audience. A lecturer who has nothing but a battering ram for existing systems, thus throwing the educational world into a state of chaos, would do well before taking the field, to prepare something definite to suggest in place of the things to be demolished. The greatest obstacle in our path, today, is the would be educator, who, judging our schools by those which he taught many years ago, mounts his hobby and rides boldly to the attack. Very recently, a gentleman who has written much on the subject of education in our city, visited one of the schools and in the course of a talk on the unexpected excellencies he had observed, stated that it was the first time he had ever been inside of a Chicago

public school. In spite, however, of the low estimate which must be placed on the judgment of the class of critics to which the gentlemen belonged, we must admit that the ability to distinguish between good and bad teaching is not a minus quantity outside of the teaching corps. The thoughts in this paper are based on an experience of many years at the head of a large school. Although the patrons have done but little visiting, it has long been evident that they not only appreciate, but are keenly alive to the merits of the superior teachers. They distinguish between the weakness that demands respect because the teacher is supreme, and the strength that commands respect because the instruction and discipline are founded on broad scholarship and good judgment.<sup>17</sup>

What simple solutions they must have seemed; yet, they described the difference between the art of teaching and a "cookbook" formula for which so many educators were willing to settle. She had just given the essence of good teaching, and she was about to get the chance to convey it to more than the Skinner teachers and more than the convention audience. She had just been appointed to an assistant superintendency. Her career was expanding to wider horizons, and so were Chicago's city limits.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Instruction, City of Chicago. Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending August 31, 1878. (Chicago: Board of Education, 1878), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Hildegarde Romberg, "The Origin and Development of the Public Elementary Schools in Chicago" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1935), pp. 165-169.

<sup>3</sup> John T. McManis, Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools. (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1916), pp. 71-72.

<sup>4</sup> Mary J. Herrick, The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, Inc., 1971), pp. 54-56.

<sup>5</sup> McManis, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> Herrick, pp. 55-56.

<sup>7</sup> McManis, pp. 56-61.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 56-70.

<sup>10</sup> Herrick, p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> McManis, pp. 56-70.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>14</sup> Ella Flagg Young to Minnie Barrett, 31 October 1881, and 2 March 1882, Minnie Barrett Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago.

<sup>15</sup> Rosemary Donatelli, "The Contributions of Ella Flagg Young to the Educational Enterprise" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago Microfilms, #T22617, 1971), p. 89 citing an interview with Mrs. William Reavis, May 4, 1966.

<sup>16</sup> Donatelli, p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> Ella F. Young, "How to Teach Parents to Discriminate between Good and Bad Teaching," The Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the National Education Association (Salem, Mass.: National Education Association, 1888), pp. 245-49.

## CHAPTER 4

## CLIMBING A LITTLE HIGHER

In the last two decades of the 19th century Chicago became an arena for battles between labor and capital. The growth of the city was too rapid for easy accommodation. The newly arrived German, Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants were absorbed into the labor force where conditions were not good. Meanwhile, a comparatively small proportion of "second generation" immigrants -- like Phillip Armour, George Pullman and Cyrus McCormick -- were rapidly climbing the business ladder of success.<sup>1</sup>

In the five years from 1885 to 1890 Chicago doubled its population as it went from 629,985 to 1,205,669.<sup>2</sup> For the next twenty years it would continue to add a half a million people to its city every ten years. By 1890 nearly 80 percent of the population was foreign born.<sup>3</sup> The Haymarket Riot of 1886 attested to the tensions between the groups. A financial depression ("panic") in 1893 increased the tensions; under such encumbrances the city opened the World's Columbian Exposition. Shortly before the fair ended a disappointed office seeker assassinated Mayor Harrison. Soon thereafter (1894) the American Railway Union strike, under the leadership of Eugene V. Debs, provided a graphic confirmation of the unsettled times.<sup>4</sup>

## Pressure on the Schools

In the center of this tug-of-war stood the schools. People like Jane Addams encouraged the schools to take a more active role in preparing



the child of the labor class. More practical courses of mechanical drawing, German, coloring, and clay modeling - "fads" or "ornamental subjects" as they were derogatorily called - were advocated by labor's friends. On the other hand, the voices of big business were bemoaning the inefficiency of the schools; their overburdened curriculum, their over-extended budget, their negligence in teaching the rudiments, their advocacy of compulsory education laws, and their overcrowded conditions.<sup>5</sup> To add to the tension, the rising tide of the Woman Movement was spilling into the schools' male dominated administrative organization.

Superintendent Howland had stressed the classics while providing instruction in some "fads." He had also attempted to examine new teachers and make recommendations to the board. The latter, however, "accepted or ignored his recommendations as it pleased, and was free to appoint applicants he did not recommend."<sup>6</sup> His influence was small and his authority never really defined. He urged principals to help their teachers, and to teachers he stressed the need to interest children in school subjects as a means of erasing discipline problems. Unfortunately, he had insufficient administrative help to ensure adequate supervision. Twice in the last ten years he had resigned to force concessions from the board.<sup>7</sup>

In 1885, Superintendent Howland announced a plan for reconstructing the central administrative staff. First, he recommended that all educational departments, including music, drawing, German and physical culture, should be under the control and direction of the superintendency; and secondly, the number of superintendent's assistants should be increased

from three to five in order to cut down on the number of school visitations made by each assistant. He felt that these changes would lead to better methods of instruction, discipline, and attainment among the teaching corps as well as to greater assistance for the board in determining the course of study and textbooks. With an increased force one of the assistants would conduct classes for new teachers on a weekly basis.<sup>9</sup> Complaints about the teaching quality had been chronic. Consequently, two years later they increased the number of assistant superintendents from three to five, although the board had never spelled out the duties of the superintendent, much less his assistants. Two of the new ones were women, and one of the two women was Ella Flag Young. Howland had known Ella since her days as a student in the Normal department and knew she would work hard. The Skinner teachers were surprised. As one of them put it, "we received a decided shock when Mr. Brennan, a member of the board told us that our principal was too big a woman for her present place and was wanted for a bigger job."<sup>10</sup>

#### Assistant Superintendent Young

In the fall of 1887 Mrs. Young embarked on her twelve-year career as assistant superintendent. Her talents and interests were suited perfectly to the problems that Howland faced, i.e., raising teaching quality and creating a more cohesive course of study. The first years of her appointment must have been a bit overwhelming to her. It could not have taken her long to realize that conditions elsewhere in the city were antithetical to what she had just left at Skinner. Even

though the school board had provided for the erection of 271 more buildings between 1884 and 1893, they were still forced to rent temporary space in buildings and basements. From 1886 to 1893 total enrollment had gone from 630,000 to about 1,500,000 and the number of pupils attending half-day sessions rose from 6,000 to 14,000!<sup>11</sup> Her responsibilities involved regular school visitations in her assigned district to carry out board policies; and exercising administrative functions for the superintendent, such as examining teachers, reporting on conditions, and making suggestions on transfers and changes in assignment.<sup>12</sup>

By 1889, it was clear that even five assistants would not be enough to cover the recent annexation of more districts, and the board approved the addition of three more. The eight assistant superintendents continued performing the same types of duties in their respective districts. Ella Young worked hard at reforming conditions, but rapid enrollment growth, coupled with the lack of teacher training, made it difficult. She developed a reputation as being cold, hard, severe, without sympathy and even mannish among the less industrious and competent teachers and principals whom she encountered. She did not mince words when she found unsatisfactory work! At the same time she searched for good teaching, never failing to commend and praise it.<sup>13</sup>

The task of raising standards was Herculean, but even her critics said she was fit for what she did and acknowledged her power. In her contacts she worked diligently at maintaining a fairness and candidness with everyone. Her first district was on the West side. She found sixty to seventy pupils crowded into a room, spending four to five

years in early grades never learning to read. The principal refused to make other provisions, so she did: she had all but fifty-four seats taken from the primary rooms. (The story was told that after she was moved to a South district he had them returned, but there is no written evidence of this request.)<sup>14</sup>

Howland was growing weary. In August, 1891, he tendered his resignation, giving ill health as his reason. The board asked him to reconsider, even offered him an extended vacation, but he refused both.<sup>15</sup> The board approached Albert G. Lane who denied at first. Finally, he accepted for the following September.

No foreigner to schools or Chicago, Lane had been educated in the public schools (a Scammon graduate and first high school class graduate of 1858). He had served as high school principal and he had just completed five terms as Cook County Superintendent of Schools. He quickly took the reins, and the administration continued to function with the same fervor.<sup>16</sup> In his first report he lamented the lack of a teacher training institute and encouraged the re-establishment of one.<sup>17</sup> After having just superintended Colonel Francis W. Parker's work at the Cook County Normal, teacher qualifications must have looked pretty poor to him in Chicago — this probably contributed to his initial reluctance to accept the job.

#### The Joseph M. Rice Report

School conditions did not go unnoticed. In 1892 Dr. Joseph Mayer Rice personally observed a sampling of schools throughout the country.

In muckraking style he exposed their conditions in a series of articles which appeared in the Forum magazine. Of the larger school systems he observed - New York and Philadelphia, especially - he found Chicago to be the "least progressive."<sup>18</sup> The biggest problem he said, was the lack of professional training on the part of the teachers. He found the schools generally "so unscientific" that their standard by "minimum requirement is... very low." By scientific he meant a teacher "obliged to do her utmost toward keeping her methods abreast of the times," while by unscientific he meant a teacher using "the most mechanical, antiquated, and absurd methods,... so long as certain memoriter results."<sup>19</sup> While there were a number of excellent schools in the city, the poor ones, he stated, far outnumbered them. Generally, the examples of poor teaching had to do with the methods employed for reading and arithmetic. He exonerated Superintendent Lane because he had held the office for such a short time and because during his county superintendence "some of the best schools in the country were developed," such as Englewood and the Cook County Normal.

The criticisms hit the administration hard. By 1893 the board passed a law requiring all cadets to serve five months before being eligible for appointment. In this five months they would spend the morning in teaching and the afternoons studying theory under the guidance of the superintendents.<sup>20</sup> To themselves the superintendent and the board defended the schools; while to a teachers' meeting Mrs. Young said:

A few weeks ago, if I had been told that the old-time recitation in history, formal question and memorized answer, was still to be found in Chicago schools, I would have resented the slander. But I cannot deny the testimony of my own eyes and ears. Lately I have actually listened

to recitations of just that kind, and in the fifth, and sixth, grade rooms, too, where of all places, they ought not to be found.<sup>21</sup>

It should have surprised no one that she could understand what Rice saw. Six years earlier she had alluded to the same kinds of situations in her address before the NEA. She knew all too well how, out of methodological ignorance and lack of scholarship, teachers could distort approaches and resort to absurd interpretations of technique. She had worked hard with her Skinner teachers to avoid this.

To fit the new ruling of the board, a Teachers' Training Class was organized and put in charge of two full time instructors. Assistant Superintendent Young took an active role in this, lecturing on psychology and education. As one of her critics even said, "Her lectures are largely attended not from duty but from pleasure. She is a fascinating speaker, knows her subject thoroughly and always gives us something to carry away."<sup>22</sup>

She also revitalized the monthly teacher institutes providing stimulation and information to the "unscientific" teachers. That she kept their interest and inspired them is attested to by a teacher's comment about her sense of humor: It is "one of the reasons we all flock to hear Mrs. Young and sit on the steps of the hall for an hour waiting to get a seat."<sup>23</sup>

#### Beginning Graduate Study

Ella continued to broaden her own education too. In the fall of 1895 she enrolled in a seminar at the University of Chicago as a student

under a youthful professor named John Dewey. Three years earlier the University of Chicago had opened a Department of Philosophy and a Department of Pedagogy to offer graduate work to leaders in the school systems — superintendents, principals, and normal training teachers. Ella fit the category, although her lack of an undergraduate degree would later cause problems. Graduate school could provide the opportunity that she needed to advance her professional training. If successful, she would have open to her a wider range of professional choices than she had now. She decided to give it a try.<sup>24</sup>

On enrollment day, however, she almost backed out. "I was told that in order to enter Mr. Dewey's course I should have to present a permit signed by him," she later recalled. "I looked up the long flight of stairs of Cobb Hall and watched the eager faces of the young people and decided that it was a place for young people, and I should not take up the work. As I turned to leave, some young man who knew me by appearance stepped up and offered to go upstairs to Mr. Dewey and get his signature for me. So that's the way I happened to enter the University of Chicago."<sup>25</sup>

Ella was to participate in Dewey's seminar course for the next four years, taking up the study of logic, ethics, metaphysics, and Hegel's philosophy.

By the time she was taking the Hegel seminars her close relationship to Dewey was evident much to the irritation of some students. One fellow seminar member recalled her as "a serious student, alert to what was going on, who had opinions of her own, and was able to express them." In this latter respect, he added:

I used to feel that she went too far; she seemed inclined to run things somewhat. I could see that she was acquainted with Dewey, and he appeared to let her have a good deal of rein — perhaps on account of their acquaintance. She was not of the tiresome talker variety, who monopolizes things and rides over you. What she had to say was good. There were no indications of verbo-mania or the sort of egotism that bores one to death. It was rather, if anything, a case of her and Dewey discussing Hegel to the neglect of the rest of us. I do not know that her views were 'way yonder' ahead of the average of the class, but she was disposed to 'get into the game' about all the time, and of course she was giving her own views and not absorbing those of others.<sup>26</sup>

Ella, as she had always done, brought her own excitement in learning to her teacher institutes. One participant says that these meetings were so enjoyable "because the leader herself was the best learner in attendance."<sup>27</sup> Just as she had at the Skinner, she was demonstrating to an even larger audience the great stimulation gained from an active and pensive mind. Only this time she had more professional help in the form of speakers. William James of Harvard was one such speaker who said after one of his lectures to the teachers, "I came expecting to find bare walls, and I find pictures and statuary adorning the school rooms. I came expecting to talk to an audience untrained to think in abstract terms and I was compelled to reconstruct my entire series of lectures to meet the demands of the teachers."<sup>28</sup> Sometimes topics changed to teaching conditions, and Ella invited the teachers to voice their opinions and make recommendations.<sup>29</sup>

The large mass of "unscientific" teachers were slowly transforming themselves into a capable, enlightened group of professional educators. Other speakers came from the city itself: John Dewey, James Angell and perhaps Colonel Francis W. Parker, too, for by 1896 under his leadership the Cook County Normal had been transferred into the city



under the jurisdiction of the Chicago Board of Education. Albert Lane and Parker were long-time friends.<sup>30</sup> No longer would untrained teachers from a feeble cadet system be admitted to the city's teaching corps. Education was on the upswing in Chicago.

#### Controversies Continue

All problems, however, were far from solved. From 1893 to 1895 the "fads" had come severely under attack by board members and the public alike. As usual money was tight and some thought that the added expense of keeping the "fads" was unnecessary especially when critics had said that teaching of the rudiments suffered. For the most part it was businessmen who were still opposed.<sup>31</sup> Others — educators mostly — talked of the necessity of keeping the fads because of their practical utility. The solution to the overcrowded curriculum they said lay in the Herbartian theory of correlation where subjects with commonalities were woven together in a more general course. The board's answer was the following: 1) German was retained in the grammar grades, but eliminated in the primary; 2) drawing (mechanical) was removed from the first grade; 3) coloring was restricted to the first three grades; and 4) sewing was eliminated.<sup>32</sup>

After 1895 the fad attack had subsided enough so that in 1898, when a new course of study was introduced, one of the Chicago newspapers that had opposed the fads, referred to the study of household arts and manual training as "promising innovations" contributing to a well

rounded education.<sup>33</sup> To the teachers and Ella Flagg Young Club, Mrs. Young had this to say:

Drawing has given the children more means to express themselves. Scissors, blocks, and various implements have released the little hands from the slate and pencil, which Mr. Howland called 'the modern pillory and thumbscrew.' The aim of manual training is not to drive boys to trades, and keep them away from the overcrowded professions, but to increase the value of their work in every department. Girls are not taught the domestic arts in the public school to train them for servants, but for the purpose of teaching them the values of foods and hygiene.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of the controversies certain inroads for the "practical sciences" were made. Sloyd, the Swedish system of woodworking was still being used in regular classes and had been since its introduction in special "truant" classes in 1876; a one year high school course in manual training and woodworking had been extended to two years in 1887; a private school, providing a three year manual course was opened in 1888; and the Board of Education opened the English and Manual Training High School in 1890. By 1896 twelve elementary schools had rooms equipped with manual training tools.<sup>35</sup>

#### Her Influence Spreads

By 1898 Mrs. Young had been appointed as Supervisor of Domestic Arts, and her talents were channeled in another direction. She must have felt the added duty to some extent. At least a staff member in her district thought so:

Mrs. Young has been appointed supervisor of the domestic arts, and we are beginning to think she is being imposed upon. She is so capable, so willing, and everything she undertakes is so well done that it would surprise nobody if she were appointed head of manual training and gave a

practical demonstration of the way to make a chair. She is an inspiration to the teachers who feel themselves incompetent to manage household affairs owing to their exclusive attention to intellectual work.<sup>36</sup>

She took up the new work by expressing some concerns. Up until this time specialists had been hired to instruct in the domestic and manual arts. Ella thought that this was a mistake and called for unification and coordination. Yet, she also understood the reluctance behind such a move:

Have you ever thought of the difference between the conditions surrounding kindergartens, manual-training rooms, and vacation schools, and those surrounding the regular schoolrooms? The former were established in recognition of the failure of the regular school to meet certain needs. If they should merely duplicate the old, the very reason for their existence would proclaim them failures. They must be, not variations on the established schools, but radically different. The more innovations they introduce, the nearer they fulfill their mission. The public school, on the other hand, is bound to the past. Back of it are thousands of parents, demanding that their children shall give evidence from day to day that they are learning what their parents before them learned. Back of it are the taxpayers, feeling the burden of taxation and demanding that the simple, inexpensive curriculum of long ago be substituted for the extravagant course of study of today. Back of it are the traditions of the school, which made its life something distinct, aloof from the life of society. In this environment are the voices calling to the teaching corps to act as the great conservator of a past theory of culture.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout her term as assistant superintendent (then district superintendent when the title was changed in 1898), Mrs. Young's influence grew. In 1889, the governor appointed her to the state board of education — a position she held for the next twenty years.<sup>38</sup> For most of this time she served on the course of study and teachers' standing committees. Her work in this capacity carried her throughout the state, where she spoke at county institutes. A teacher from Peoria

who attended one of her institutes said that "she has few equals in her power to inspire teachers to make more of themselves and live up to the best that is in them." Another prominent educator in the state said of her work on the state board that she was the "best man on the board."<sup>39</sup>

In 1888; the year after she was appointed to the assistant superintendency, she became prominent in a newly formed club called the School Mistresses Club, the founding of which was brought about by political interests of women in the state. While Mrs. Young did not advocate having a separate organization, she did approve of its purposes — educational and humanitarian growth — and became an active member of the group, serving a long term as its president. Mrs. J. Rose Colby remembers her as having said more than once that "its meeting and its work were the most valuable meetings and work she had ever shared." Ella's "influence carried the day," said Mrs. Colby, adding:

She was president of the club for as many years as we could win or force her consent to hold that office. As leader she did for us what she has everywhere done as leader — she stimulated us to many-sided reading and growth, to a greater intellectual curiosity, and a new sense of the significance of intellectual life. More than anyone else I have ever known she had and has the power of a great leader — if she asked any woman of us to do anything, we wanted to do it, and even though we doubted our own powers, she managed to give the doubter courage. More than one undeveloped and possibly crude woman grew visibly from year to year in the work. And the spirit of good fellowship and comradeship that grew up in the club I have never seen equaled in any other organization, whether of women alone or of men and women, that I have been connected with.<sup>40</sup>

Ella continued to be active in the NEA, thus giving her national recognition at a time when the giants were controlling it: William T. Harris and Nicolas M. Butler in particular.<sup>41</sup>

In her address at the Chicago meeting of July 1893 she expressed again the need for flexibility in classifying (placing people in appropriate grade-levels) as Harris had twenty years earlier and as educators have since, with emphasis on informal classrooms. Here is how she summed it up:

That grading, classifying, and transferring which keep a school flexible, which meet the needs of the individual pupils, will not be found in a school where a specialty holds sway. There children will be detained in their grades in order that it may be shown that first grade children can read well in the second reader; that second grade pupils can observe as well as fourth grade pupils observe in other schools; that sixth grade pupils can quote from encyclopedias as well as high-school pupils sometimes quote.

Flexibility in grading and classification will be found in that school in which the principal has a personal knowledge of the work of the various classes, and of the ability and growth of each child. It will be found in that system of schools in which the superintendent has a personal knowledge of the work of each teacher, and develops all along the line, correct thinking about the dangers attendant upon mechanism in education.<sup>42</sup>

In another address given in Buffalo three years later, her theme was the need for inspiring students by providing for individual growth. She discussed the approaches used in teaching literature and language in the elementary schools and admonished teachers to break away from any fixed course of study — even culture-epochs — because the study of literature was the one in which the "many and varied relations of the heart are portrayed in all the beauty and power of thought and expression." None of the other coordinated study areas allows such possibilities for "self-developing activity" in teacher or student as that "related to human nature."<sup>43</sup> Finally, in discussing the need for having the individual read enough so that "a picture in wholeness"

can be painted before conversation or discussion is attempted, she gives the following illustration:

This year, March gave us no sign of spring. Cold, northeast winds kept the blossoms back. April came bringing no showers. Suddenly all was changed. The breath of spring was like that of summer. Longing for the beauty of water and sky, I went one sultry Sabbath morning to the lake shore. Many had been impelled to go there, and it was a remarkable sight that met the eye. There were gathered men, women, and children; some sitting, some standing, others slowly walking to and fro, but a silent throng. Conversation, there was none. Out upon that wonderful scene, a most gorgeous display of color, went every eye. A haze spread itself above the many-colored waters, so that the line where the earth and sky met was lost to view. Here and there fleecy clouds cast their shadows on the water. Families came to that beach, and as the little ones were lifted from their carriages, they with the older children stood for a moment gazing in open-eyed wonder at that which held all entranced. Here and there a husband and wife, or friends, after long gazing off on the deep, would exchange a glance that spoke volumes. A father and his young son mounted their wheels, took one long, lingering look, and then without a word rode quietly away. The next day I said to some friends whom I had seen on that beach, 'What a wonderful sight that was.' Then conversation began. One spoke of the ever-pressing thought that there were as many scenes as there were minds enjoying it, so varied must have been the delicacy of sense and the depth of experience coming from the different homes represented there; or, in other words, said he, the material world is what the mind and its reaction makes it. Another remarked that she did not think so much about this world; she had been realizing that there were things invisible to her, yet seen by a finer type of being. These two threads were taken up and found to be parts of the same idea. After the threads had been woven into the same strand, we closed our conversation with a return to that beautiful whole. Two children talked of that scene. The little girl told her brother of her tender fear because she knew she could not think the thoughts that mamma had. The boy talked of the great worlds he was going to see when he could cross not only Lake Michigan, but the ocean. And they finally came back to that beautiful scene. This interchange of thought was the result of the dynamic power of that scene. Torn to pieces by questions on isolated details, immediately upon the appearance of a color, or a shadow, merely indifferent, monosyllabic replies would have come of it in a forced conversation. As this picture, painted from nature's gorgeous display, and viewed in quiet meditation, acted

upon our minds, so the thoughts, fancies, and experiences of mankind, read from the classic page and absorbed in thoughtful repose, will enrich and ennoble the soul of teacher and child.<sup>44</sup>

### Politics and the Board

In 1898 controversies began to appear revolving around the superintendent. Some of the board members were opposed to Lane's policies, politics and educational training (or lack thereof). A prominent member of the board, University of Chicago's President William Rainey Harper, had just headed up a commission who made a 248-page report on the condition of the schools with recommendations for improvements. One of his recommendations called for a reorganization of administrative functions. It would reduce the board membership from 21 to 11 to be appointed by the mayor but not subject to approval by the city council (as was then the procedure). It also called for the delegation of more central control and authority to the Superintendent: 1) he should have a term of six years, instead of one; 2) he should be removed only on cause of written charges by a two-thirds vote of the board; 3) he should have the right to appoint his own assistants; 4) he should certify all teachers and recommend all promotions or dismissals.<sup>45</sup>

The board officially adopted only the recommendation of greater centralization, an action which ran counter to Lane's style of administration. He had delegated a large amount of authority to his staff. Lane's superintendency also presented other difficulties. He was a leading republican in a democratic administration; and his professional training had terminated after his graduation from the city high school.

Whatever the real reasons, in the summer of 1898, Lane failed re-election and E. Benjamin Andrews - with the right politics and professional training - was brought in from the presidency of Brown University (where he was in trouble for his advocacy of Bryan's free silver stand). Harper wrote to the mayor (June 3, 1898):

I said to you at the beginning of the year that I was of the opinion that there would be sufficient number on the Board of Education who would be willing to vote for another candidate for the superintendent of the schools. I am still of that opinion, and I believe that if it should be your desire a sufficient number of votes could be obtained for Mr. Andrews at the next meeting of the board.<sup>46</sup>

President Harper was already well acquainted with Mr. Andrews, who had been President of Denison University when Harper had started his teaching career there. Harper had also wanted Andrews to co-preside over the University of Chicago, but had met opposition from the University's Board of Trustees.<sup>47</sup>

That Andrews' administration was going to be one of more centralized control was clear from the start. Barely in office, his first action was to dismiss a principal for incompetency - a step which had not been taken for twenty-seven years. He also wanted board rules revised so that he could participate in board meetings. By October he had transferred an assistant principal without board approval.

All this was getting to be an invasion of his proper functioning - at least by previous standards - and the board did not like it. He was also managing to offend the teaching corps, some of whom had formed themselves into unions. They opposed his "dictatorial policies," including his stand on curricular expansion. Although he did not consider manual arts to be fads, he made it clear that "groundwork"



(rudiments) were to take precedence over these newer subjects.<sup>48</sup>

Also in 1898 the board changed the titles of seven of the eight assistant superintendents to district superintendents. The superintendent in charge of the high schools retained his "assistant" title, and became, in effect second in command.<sup>49</sup> Albert Lane reluctantly stepped down to this position after his reelection effort failed.<sup>50</sup>

### Resignation

On June 3, 1899, Ella Flagg Young resigned her position, citing dissatisfaction with Superintendent Andrews' centralized administration. In newspaper interviews of that week she had been quoted as saying that she refused to remain in a position in which she was a "mere figurehead" and had registered disapproval of Andrews' "one-man power."<sup>51</sup> She made it quite clear that she would no longer work under a superintendent who administered from the top, refusing to allow a democratic interplay of teacher-administrator ideas. She had been running her district meetings democratically. The actual relationship existing between Mr. Andrews and Mrs. Young is unknown. At the very least he must have refused to take into account recommendations and suggestions stemming from her district council meetings. Hence, she wrote to Board President Graham H. Harris:

Dear Sir - It is my intention to sever my connection with the public schools of Chicago at the close of the current school month.

The Board of Education has undergone many changes since I entered its service, yet it has ever generously recognized whatever of merit has been in my work. I take this

opportunity to make acknowledgment of the courtesy and encouragement extended me by the Board.

Respectfully yours,  
 Ella F. Young,  
 District Supertendent of Schools.<sup>52</sup>

The matter however, did not end with this. The teachers, many of whom saw her as their champion, were up in arms. Some of the more organized groups like the Chicago Teachers' Federation and the Chicago Teachers' Club planned meetings to protest her resignation and admonish the board to take all necessary actions to retain her; but she did not want to be retained. She wrote both to the Federation's President, Miss Catharine Goggin, as well as the Chicago Teachers' Club President, Miss Marey E. Lynch, the following letter:

I have learned through the city press that the Federation and the Teachers' Club will meet Saturday, June 10, to prepare a petition to the Board of Education in relation to my resignation. While warmly appreciating the friendly attitude which leads some of the teachers to take such action, I owe it to them, because of their confidence in me, to declare my position.

As you well know, I hold positive views regarding official courtesy and official discipline. Only after careful consideration of all the conditions did I take this important step. To withdraw my resignation would imply either that the conditions had not been duly considered by me or that the conditions had been changed. Neither of these implications is true.

Let me present the subject in another light. When a subordinate in interviews, which she knows will be published in the daily papers, expresses herself as being in disaccord professionally with her superior in office, the relations of the subordinate and chief should be severed. Under the circumstances it would not be in accord with my theories of discipline for me to continue as a district superintendent.

Promotion in the Chicago public schools is made impossible for me by the events of the past week, not because of inability on my part to meet heavy responsibilities, but because my resignation and the published interviews would

furnish ground for a misunderstanding as to my motives in resigning.

You are sufficiently familiar with my methods of speech to know that when I state I had absolutely no new position under consideration at the time of notifying the President of the Board of my intention to leave the schools, the statement means exactly what appears on its face. Equally clear and direct is my statement that I intend entering into the duties of another educational position when a satisfactory one shall present itself.

That no doubt shall exist as to my attitude, the above is summed up as follows: First, I cannot withdraw my resignation; second, I cannot continue to serve as a member of the teaching corps of the public schools of Chicago.

With earnest wishes for the welfare of the schools and the teachers of Chicago, I am yours very truly,

Ella F. Young.<sup>53</sup>

Miss Goggin wrote back:

Dear Mrs. Young.

At the special meeting of the Federation held on Saturday, June 10, the President was instructed to write to you and express the deep regret which the Federation felt, on learning officially, from your letter, that your determination in regard to your resignation, was unalterable. The newspapers have given the text of the resolutions which were passed, but no paper, nor any letter can begin to express the sorrow which came over the meeting when the members began to realize fully what your retirement from the work meant, not only to the school system, but to them personally. The suggestion that District Eight had experienced a special loss was at once resented and nothing but the feeling that you would disapprove prevented the adoption of resolutions of a much stronger tenor. Being a teacher in District Eight, I cannot refrain from expressing to you, the feeling of utter desolation which has come to me from many of the teachers of the district, and which time strengthens rather than lessens. During the past year which is just about to close, many things have arisen to try our patience and render us fearful of the future, but the contingency of your withdrawal was never anticipated, and while we do not question your wisdom, it is difficult in the face of what we consider a public calamity to take a hopeful view of the case. With you in the office, we felt that there was always a friend as well as an official, and this feeling was not confined

to the district which has for so long, enjoyed your special care.

I have heard that you intend to spend some time abroad. I am glad that you are, for it would be doubly hard for us to know that you were in the city, but not in the work. I hope your voyage will be safe and pleasant, and that you may return with renewed health and hope.

Thank you for the consideration which you have extended to the Federation and the kindness and confidence which you have shown me personally. I am,

Very sincerely yours,  
Catharine Goggin,  
President<sup>54</sup>

A petition already signed by thousands of teachers, was presented to the board with this heading:

In order that the citizens of Chicago may understand Mrs. Young's reason for resigning, it is necessary to state that she has been deprived of the educational influence which she had exerted under former school administration. Mrs. Young is a graduate of the Chicago public schools and has filled with honor and ability every place in the school system from the lowest to the highest, and her work has contributed in a large degree to the excellent reputation which our public schools enjoy among the cities of the Union. She has a national reputation as an educator and has the facility of inspiring with the highest ideas of manhood and womanhood every teacher and pupil who comes within the sphere of her influence. . . . Mrs. Young has taken this noble and courageous course in order to place the matter in its true light, and also to impress on the minds of the citizens of Chicago the danger that lurks in the present movement of Mr. Andrews.<sup>55</sup>

In the meantime, Superintendent Andrews had commented:

By declining re-election for another year Mrs. Ella F. Young has severed her connection with the public school system of Chicago. Mrs. Young is a woman of rare talent, untiring energy, large acquirements and ripe educational experience, who has deservedly won a host of admiring and devoted friends. As teacher, principal, and superintendent she has served the city for thirty-seven years. I deeply regret her withdrawal from the position she has so ably filled, yet congratulate the educational public on the

promise that her professional labors, though in another field, will still be continued.<sup>56</sup>

Why with the strong backing of so many teachers, did Ella Young seem so intent on resigning? There must have been many considerations that she pondered before making this decision, for she was not given to impulsive action. Certainly her limited functioning weighed very heavily. In all likelihood she had also begun to realize that to advance any higher, her educational training would need to be furthered. Lane's demotion, after all, was said to involve his lack of training beyond the Normal school. She had already completed several graduate courses in philosophy at the recently opened University of Chicago and during the preceeding summer President Harper had outlined a plan by which she could earn a graduate degree despite her lack of the baccalaureate.<sup>57</sup>

Ella had always liked studying. It was really a chance of a lifetime for her. Selfish? Maybe. She must have feared that Catharine Goggin and the teachers would think so. After receiving Catharine's letter, she probably felt that she was deserting a sinking ship, but her mind was made up and she would not be swayed. In leaving the Chicago schools, she was adhering to a motto for which she was to become noted: "Those who live on the mountain have a longer day than those who live in the valley. Sometimes all we need to brighten our day is to climb a little higher."<sup>58</sup>

Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, now fifty-four years old, would climb much higher before she was finished.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For accounts of Chicago in the 1880's and 1890's see Wayne Andrews, Battle for Chicago (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), pp. 65-221; Emmett Dedmon, Fabulous Chicago (New York: Random House, 1953), pp. 124-250; Finis Farr, Chicago (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1973), pp. 110-248; Dorsha B. Hayes, Chicago (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1944), pp. 185-243; Joseph Kirkland, The Story of Chicago (Chicago: Dibble Publishing Co., 1892), pp. 401-51; Stephen Longstreet, Chicago: 1860-1919 (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1973), pp. 3-460; Bessie Louise Pierce, A History of Chicago, 3 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), vol. 3: 1871-1893, pp. 20-512.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Selby, "Educational," in John Moses and Joseph Kirkland, ed., Aboriginal to Metropolitan: History of Chicago, 2 vols. (Chicago: Munsell and Co., Publishers, 1895), 2: 75-127.

<sup>3</sup>Pierce, 3: 22. The exact figure was 77.8%.

<sup>4</sup>Carter Henry Harrison, Jr., Stormy Years: The Autobiography of Carter H. Harrison (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Publishers, 1935), pp. 45-46.

<sup>5</sup>For accounts of the business and labor interests as related to schools see John M. Beck, "Chicago Newspapers and the Public Schools, 1890-1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago Thesis #2178, 1953), pp. 90-218.

<sup>6</sup>Herrick, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup>A. E. Winship, "Twenty-Five Years of Chicago," Journal of Education 71 (16 June 1910): 685-89.

<sup>8</sup>Herrick, p. 56. In 1885 there were 1296 teachers and only three assistants to supervise their operations.

<sup>9</sup>Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Thirty-First Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1885 (Chicago: George K. Hazlet and Co., 1885), pp. 19-20; 52-53.

<sup>10</sup>McManis, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup>Thirty-Ninth Annual Report, pp. 29-32; Thirty-Second Annual Report, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup>Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1887 (Chicago: Hack and Anderson, 1888), p. 229.

<sup>13</sup>McManis, p. 85.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 92-93.

<sup>15</sup>Moses and Kirkland, p. 108. Mr. Howland died in October 1892 of heart failure.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Herrick, pp. 72-75.

<sup>18</sup>See Joseph M. Rice, Public-School System of the United States (New York: The Century Co., 1893), pp. 166-69.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>20</sup>Rice, p. 167 citing The Proceedings for the Board of Education, 10 May 1893. See also Thirty-Ninth Annual Report, p. 58.

<sup>21</sup>McManis, p. 80.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Storr, p. 296.

<sup>25</sup>McManis, p. 102.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 102-103.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>29</sup>Catharine Goggin to Ella Flagg Young, 21 June 1899, Box 1, Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>30</sup>Jack K. Campbell, Colonel Francis W. Parker: The Children's Crusader (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967), pp. 177-213.

<sup>31</sup>Beck, pp. 200-10.

<sup>32</sup>Forty-Second Annual Report, p. 16

<sup>33</sup>Beck, p. 211 citing The Chicago Daily News 22, November 1898.

<sup>34</sup>McManis, p. 91. The Ella Flagg Young Club was an outgrowth of the Skinner study group. Later it became a group for elementary principals as did the George Howland Club for secondary principals.

<sup>35</sup>Herrick, p. 59; Moses, p. 99; Romberg, pp. 179-81.

<sup>36</sup>McManis, pp. 85-86.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 93. For an account of the development of the State Board of Education, see George Propeck and Irving F. Pearson, The History of the Illinois Education Association (Springfield, Illinois: Illinois Education Association, 1961), pp. 57-58.

<sup>39</sup>McManis, pp. 93-4.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>41</sup>She was acquainted with Mr. Harris' ideas long before she met him; she said that his reports as superintendent of schools in St. Louis were the first professional works that she had ever read -- in the late 60's, early 70's.

<sup>42</sup>Ella Flagg Young, "Grading and Classification" in Proceedings of the International Congress of Education of the Worlds Columbian Exposition, July 25-28, 1893 under the Charge of the National Educational Association of the United States, Second Ed. (New York: The Association, 1895), p. 86.

<sup>43</sup>National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting Held at Buffalo, NY, July 3-10, 1896 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1896), pp. 114-15.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 116-17.

<sup>45</sup>Herrick, pp. 83-85.

<sup>46</sup>William Rainey Harper to Carter H. Harrison, 3 June 1898, Carter H. Harrison Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois. See also Herrick, pp. 81-83; Beck, p. 90.

<sup>47</sup>Campbell, p. 190; Storr, pp. 90; 100.

<sup>48</sup>Herrick, p. 81; Beck, pp. 94-96; Chicago Times Herald, 24 August 1898; 9 September 1898; Chicago Chronicle, 24 August 1898, 4 December 1898.

<sup>49</sup>Romberg, p. 115.

<sup>50</sup>Campbell, p. 194.

<sup>51</sup>Chicago Tribune, 5 June 1899.

<sup>52</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education... Ending June 30, 1899, p. 654.



<sup>53</sup> Minutes of the Special Meeting, Drill Hall, 10 June 1899, pp. 71-72. Box 1, Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>54</sup> Goggin to Young, 21 June 1899. Chicago Teachers' Federation Files. Box 1.

<sup>55</sup> McManis, p. 99.

<sup>56</sup> Forty-Fifth Annual Report, p. 119.

<sup>57</sup> Ella F. Young to William Rainey Harper, 28 October 1898, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 54, Folder 25. University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Illinois; John Dewey to William Rainey Harper, 1 March 1898, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 30, Folder 24.

<sup>58</sup> McManis, Frontispiece.

## CHAPTER 5.

## GRADUATE WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Sometime after Ella started taking courses at the university, she and Laura Brayton had moved six miles south to be closer to "the new university! .... A river of yellow prairie mud ... [and a] flat campus dotted with a half-dozen stone buildings, some still unfinished."<sup>1</sup> It was also closer to Hyde Park High School where Laura was now teaching. Consequently, there was no need for a hurried move after their return from Europe late in the summer of 1899. They were settled and ready to resume their work. Ella had, or rather thought she had, an agreement with President Harper to teach part time and continue work toward her Ph.D.<sup>2</sup> She did earn her doctorate and she did teach, but her four-year association with the University was not as pleasant or as tranquil as she had originally hoped. The reasons for this are complex and cannot be explained without reference to the nature of the fledgling university, its vigorous president William Rainey Harper, and to the nature of John Dewey's work at the University. Rather full accounts of all these items are readily available, but a brief re-counting here will make possible an explanation of Ella's involvement.<sup>3</sup>

## The University of Chicago and William Rainey Harper

Ella had known Harper for some time before she had the interview with him in which he invited her to join his faculty. He had been on the board of education from 1896 to 1898; his wife was a member of the

Chicago Womens Club, of which Ella had been a member since 1888.<sup>3</sup> But she did not know him well — few people did.

Harper had come to Chicago in 1879, at the age of 23, to teach Hebrew in a Baptist Seminary in Morgan Park. Knowledgeable in Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and Gothic, he had taken his Ph.D. at Yale when he was 18. His entire career was one of a super-charged "boy wonder." Harper went from Morgan Park to Denison University in Ohio, a Baptist college whose president was E. Benjamin Andrews. From there he moved to Yale as professor in two chairs simultaneously at a very high salary. He was 33 years old.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, a small group of Harper's fellow Baptists were discussing the prospect of a college or university in Chicago to be founded by wealthy Baptists — most notably John D. Rockefeller — with Harper as president. From all the discussion Harper, in his all-consuming way, caught a vision of a powerful institution: a college, like Yale; a graduate school to surpass Johns Hopkins; a faculty of the most renowned people to be drawn from the most noted universities; high standards; liberal endowments; and high tuition, but open to everyone, including teachers and workers, through extension and even correspondence study. With this paradoxical dream — "Barnum's Show" some of his faculty later called it — Harper left his Yale position in 1892.<sup>5</sup> He always had far less money than he needed; no one else, including Rockefeller, fully shared his ambitious vision; most of the renowned faculty he wanted would not come. He was to spend the next 13 years, sacrificing everything, including health and his sense of integrity, in a single-minded effort to achieve his dream.<sup>6</sup>

As already stated, Harper sought to include nearly everything in his plan. One dimension of this was a scheme for drawing Chicago's teachers into the University as students. Administrators would take graduate courses in the Departments of Pedagogy or Philosophy. Teachers, few of whom possessed more than normal school training, would take extension courses. The happy result of this approach would be culture for the teachers and tuition money for the University.<sup>7</sup>

Harper's vision of a large enrollment of teachers had a grandeur that was not readily seen in his small pedagogical department. The first regular appointment in pedagogy was Julia E. Bulkley, who accepted the rank of associate professor in 1892 (after meeting Harper at Chautauqua). She was on leave, however, until 1895 to study in Zurich. A teaching fellow (docent) in the philosophy department, Louis Célestin Monin, taught history of education and educational theory during 1893-94. This was the status of pedagogy when Harper invited John Dewey to visit the campus.<sup>8</sup>

#### John Dewey

Dewey's trip to Chicago in February 1894 happened because Harper had run out of prospects for the head professor's position in philosophy. As was frequently the case in Harper's search for eminent scholars, the most noted people would not give up their handsome salaries and agreeable appointments to chance the future in a university which lived chiefly in Harper's imagination and in a drawing on his office wall opposite

a picture of Rockefeller.<sup>9</sup> By 1894, George Herbert Palmer of Harvard, Jacob Gould Schurman of Cornell, and Harper's old friend E. Benjamin Andrews of Brown had all turned down offers to head the philosophy department. Charles S. Pierce had been considered but not offered the post.<sup>10</sup> Blocked on these fronts, Harper was forced to look for an ambitious young academician, one who would risk the future in return for more money or other concessions.

John Dewey was such a man. The thirty-five year old Vermont native had done well in the ten years since his graduation with a Ph.D. in psychology and philosophy from Johns Hopkins. He had progressed through the academic ranks at the University of Michigan (with a brief Minnesota detour) to the chair of philosophy vacated by the sudden death of his friend and mentor, George S. Morris.<sup>11</sup> His publication record in philosophy, especially philosophical psychology, was sizable.<sup>12</sup> At Michigan Dewey had become friends with James H. Tufts, who, after taking a European Ph.D., had accepted an assistant professorship in "Harper's University." It was Tufts who suggested Dewey's name. Harper offered Dewey \$3,000 and the head professorship in philosophy.<sup>13</sup> Dewey asked for \$5,000 — Harper was paying up to \$7,000 for people he wanted badly — but settled for \$4,000 and several months of paid leave to go to Europe. In the final bargain, Dewey was also named head professor in the pedagogy department.<sup>14</sup>

The pedagogy side of Dewey's appointment was to prove a source of challenge and frustration to him. When he moved to Chicago, the city was in educational ferment. Rice's indictments had appeared two years earlier.<sup>15</sup> The most famous school reformer of the time, Colonel

Francis W. Parker, was running the Cook County Normal.<sup>16</sup> Yet Dewey was hardly known in professional school circles. Dewey's later fame in education has caused nearly everyone who has written about him to assume that he was already well known in the 1890's, but this is a mistaken assumption. Since he had ended his brief high school teaching career to enter Johns Hopkins in 1882, his contacts with public schools had been minimal. Most of his time and energy had gone into his field of study, philosophy. Prior to his arrival in Chicago, he had published very little in pedagogical journals -- one article on "Teaching Ethics in the High School," in the Educational Review. He had written briefly for Science and Popular Science Monthly on the coeducation question.<sup>17</sup> Though he had participated for a time on the Michigan School Masters' Club, a small group meeting in Ann Arbor, he had never been active in the NEA which was then the most influential professional education group in the country.<sup>18</sup>

Given Dewey's need for establishing himself in education, he welcomed in his seminars a person of the outstanding experience and dedication of Ella Flagg Young. "For a number of years," Dewey wrote William James in 1903, "I have funded for my own intellectual capital more of the ideas of other people -- students and colleagues -- than I can tell."<sup>19</sup> Several years later, Dewey recalled, "I was constantly getting ideas from her....More times than I could well say I didn't see the meaning or force of some favorite conception of my own till Mrs. Young had given it back to me."<sup>20</sup> Max Eastman quoted Dewey as saying "I would come to her with these abstract ideas of mine and she would tell me what they meant."<sup>21</sup>

With both President Harper and Professor Dewey interested in having Ella come to the University, all should have gone well, but there were problems from the first. Some details of her original discussion with Dewey and Harper can only be inferred, but in basic outline the situation was as follows. In March, 1898, Dewey wrote Harper that "both Mr. Jackman and Mrs. Young are considering the matter of the spring course. I am inclined to think they will ultimately accept. Mrs. Young...feels somewhat doubtful whether she could give more than two hours a week to the work."<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Young, however, did not accept. The following fall President Harper was forced to publicly cancel a course which had been announced with Mrs. Young as teacher.<sup>23</sup> He was trying hard to induce (pressure?) the popular assistant superintendent into a formal affiliation with his university. At first Harper seems to have left the negotiations to Dewey; later he took a more direct approach. When Ella announced her resignation from the Chicago school system, President Harper was sure he had won; but even then difficulties remained.

The problem was one of cross purposes. Harper wanted Ella because of her popularity with the predominantly female teaching force. If he could induce her to offer a course in the Teachers College he was sure many teachers would enroll.<sup>24</sup> While she was not opposed to some work of this kind — she had a great deal of experience in it by 1898 — it was not her chief goal. What she wanted was to pursue her graduate degree.<sup>25</sup> At first Harper swept aside her objections that she lacked proper credentials. He was not a man to be turned down. He said an undergraduate degree could be granted based on her previous work, and that

she could finish the Ph.D. degree.<sup>26</sup> This was in June 1898. The following fall she asked for Harper's assistance:

My Dear President Harper: -

Dr. Dewey called October 26, and we briefly discussed the subject of my thesis and the lines of my reading for the degree from the department. In the course of the conversation, I learned that he can do nothing in regard to my receiving the lower degree which must be conferred before he can make a recommendation as to conferring a degree from his department, because of my thesis and other work.

As I am perplexed over the situation, I am obliged to ask if you will kindly outline definitely, the plan you had in mind at the time of our interview in June. I refer to the interview in which you offered me the position of Associate Professor of Pedagogy in the University, beginning with the year July 1900-July 1901, and I met the offer with the statement that I have no degree.

Very truly yours  
Ella F. Young<sup>27</sup>

Harper's response is not recorded - perhaps he conveyed it verbally, either directly or through someone else (Dewey?). It must have been reassuring, because Ella continued her degree work and in January gave a public endorsement to Chicago teachers of the newly formed "Teacher's College."

The University of Chicago has recently opened what it calls a college for teachers. With a warm appreciation of the fraternal attitude of the University towards the public-school teaching corps, I must express my pleasure in the new department. I am forced, however, to say that the title of the new department is confusing. There are two gains to teachers in the opening of the college, but neither of these in any way warrants the phrase "college for teachers." The first gain is in the lessening of the distance to be traveled by persons, not necessarily teachers, living in the north and west divisions of the city and wishing to study under some of the best teachers in the University. The second gain is the definite understanding as to the conditions under which teachers work in order to obtain a degree. Neither of these gains, as has been said before, has any relation to the ideal for which "teacher" stands.



To the inquiry, "Would you have the college simply a normal school or a school of pedagogy for experienced teachers?" I reply, "By no means." The contention is that there is nothing in the method of study of languages or sciences that makes for better teaching in the elementary schools, any more than there is in the departments "not for teachers." Judging by the expressions of some who are enrolled as students in the college, it is looked upon as a ladder by which teachers in the elementary schools may climb into the secondary-school corps, and members of the high-school corps into college and university faculties. It is not desired that the instruction shall be diluted to the comprehension of young children, but it is desired that the work shall be so related to life that students in the college for teachers shall not share with university graduates in a distaste for teaching the young below the high schools. The outlook for elementary education is not brightened by the present attitude of the student class toward the child under fifteen years of age. The present treatment of subjects makes one almost understand the objection of giving women a higher education, as it takes them away from the children, and somebody must teach the children. The narrow limits within which the vast majority of teachers pursued their studies have restricted both their method and their theory of education. But those offering advanced courses to teachers should make sure that the elements of the deepest and highest forms of life are in what they offer.

The manner in which the University has thrown open its doors to the Chicago teachers commands our admiration. It meets our ideal of a university as a great educational force, shedding its light throughout an entire city. That the teachings of the department of philosophy and pedagogy have not been concreted in the department termed the college for teachers surprises and disappoints us. It is to be hoped that the plan of the college will receive further consideration in time, giving to its students an equipment that will elevate the teaching corps in all the departments of its work. With the University faculty and other competent lectures on the subjects of arts, science, and literature in this city, the public-school teacher who can calmly look on, taking no part in class or club organized for study, must regret the hard fortune which forces her to mingle with the great body of Chicago teachers — a body of students.<sup>28</sup>

Ella was listed to teach a course in winter and spring 1899, but there is no evidence that she did so.<sup>29</sup> By June, when she resigned as district superintendent, nothing more had happened toward her

undergraduate degree equivalency. She decided to take an "extended" trip to Europe.<sup>30</sup> Probably she intended to pursue an advanced degree there. Julia Bulkley, whom Ella certainly knew in the Department of Pedagogy, had studied for her degree in Zurich.<sup>31</sup> She may well have given Ella some tips.

The night before Ella and Laura were to sail, Mr. Mallory, Harper's secretary, called on her at home. After apparent further reassurances about the undergraduate degree situation, Mallory conveyed an offer of "associate professional lecturer" — a rank Harper had just invented for her, for one year while she finished her Ph.D. She accepted and departed for Europe. All was settled, or so it appeared.<sup>32</sup>

When Ella returned in the fall, she found that nothing had been done about evaluating her work for an undergraduate degree. She again communicated with President Harper, reminding him that she did not want to be teaching and spurring other teachers on to higher education when she herself had not met the proper requirements; she, therefore, appreciated her "ineligibility for such a position."<sup>33</sup>

Harper must have asked Dewey to take the matter up with the Faculty of Arts. Harry Pratt Judson, Dean of that faculty, wrote back to Dewey saying that she would have to do one year's work.<sup>34</sup> Now, this most definitely was not the plan that had been outlined to her a year earlier. She was getting quite concerned and undoubtedly began wondering if she had made a mistake in trusting these people. She was already teaching two courses for the Teacher's College under the assumption that she was working towards her Ph.D.<sup>35</sup> Now, it seemed she needed to start over and work towards her baccalaureate. Dewey wrote

immediately to Harper "relative to the case of Mrs. E. F. Young, I have received the enclosed from Dean Judson. I am inclined to think Mrs. Young is a little restive now and that if this action is taken it might easily result in the termination of her University relations."<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps the trouble all along had been that Harper had left to Dewey the matter of getting the Arts Faculty to favorably review Ella's credentials. In terms of administration, the procedure was logical, but Dewey was not popular with many of his colleagues. Robert Herrick, a novelist who taught literature during Dewey's time and later, indicated that many of the faculty disliked him and regarded him as a snob. He satirized him as "foppish...with his affected intonation, his eye-glass and eternal harping on 'form,' 'what we should give our students is a sense of form.'"<sup>37</sup>

In any case Harper took some kind of direct action and the issue was finally cleared up. "Thanks to your courtesy, the work on the estimation of my equivalents for the lower degree was attended to promptly and no longer attracts my attention," she wrote Harper in December. "I have presented myself before Mr. Howland and Mr. Cutting for examination as to my reading knowledge of French and German. The necessary certificate, signed by them, is in [the Dean's] possession."<sup>38</sup>

Ella's teaching went well. She offered two sections of a pedagogy course, one on campus and one in her home (with refreshments), to a combined total of 37 students.<sup>39</sup> These numbers, however, were a long way from the large enrollments Harper envisioned. He wanted Ella to offer more courses. She wrote on December 2 that she was doing all

that had been agreed to for the \$83.33/month stipend she was receiving. She reminded the President that she would have a hard enough time teaching two courses, taking three, and writing "a creditable thesis" without adding more work.<sup>40</sup>

The problem of enrollments was another matter. If she could meet the class in a location more convenient to teachers — somewhere downtown — and that if some reduction in the tuition rates could be granted, more teachers would enroll. "I am confident, President Harper, that you will pardon my taking enough of your time to express my pleasure over finding that a considerable amount of coldness toward the college is due to things material (high fees, car fares, long rides, long hours) rather than to hostility of spirit toward the University." She reminded him that "a little more personal interest in the teachers' plans for study in the college; a little more of that generous appreciation which you have so kindly extended to me, if extended to the teachers when they apply for admission, would help, with some financial concessions, to build up a membership of at least a thousand in a short time." There is no evidence that the over extended Harper took the needed steps to make the Teachers' College the kind of success he had envisioned.<sup>41</sup>

One other activity in which Ella was engaged while teaching, taking courses and writing was assisting John Dewey with a small private elementary school which he had started in 1896. Attended mainly by faculty members' children, the school was part of Dewey's efforts to make himself familiar with educational practice now that he was head of the pedagogy department. It opened with sixteen pupils, four of them

Dewey's own children.<sup>42</sup> The school had a number of difficulties. Dewey was busy with other (department of philosophy) matters, and, in any case, was not very clear about what he expected from the school. At times he spoke of it as a clinic or laboratory (Ella suggested the name "Laboratory School") where a search would be conducted for the best methods. On other occasions he talked as if the best methods and techniques were already known and would be demonstrated in the school.<sup>43</sup> Another difficulty was a constant shortage of funds. Harper approved of the school in principle but he could not spare much money to help. The dissatisfaction of some parents with the school (one of whom was among Harper's good friends) probably did not help Dewey's cause. George S. Goodspeed said of his son's experience in the school, "One year at the University Preparatory Laboratory, otherwise known as the D\_\_\_\_\_ School (supply the proper word, not on Sunday, please!) nearly ruined him. We have to teach him how to study! He learned to 'observe' last year."<sup>44</sup> Another parent, after observing declared "My children are not going to that school."<sup>45</sup>

So Ella's help was timely. "Mr. Dewey and I are carefully considering what can be done to make the work of the Elementary School really available in the pedagogical department," she wrote President Harper in December 1899. "We had planned that I should begin the latter part of this week on a study of the working out of the theory and method of the school as a preliminary to an expert report, thorough and searching, to Mr. Dewey."<sup>46</sup> Her efforts were appreciated. "In the reorganization of the laboratory school after certain weaknesses in its original scheme of administration had become apparent (due

largely to my inexperience in administrative matters) her influence with that of Mrs. Dewey were the controlling factors," Dewey said a few years later. "It is due to these two that the laboratory school ran so much more systematically and definitely -- free from a certain looseness of ends and edges -- in its last three or four years."<sup>47</sup> Dewey's daughters later quoted him as having said that Ella was the "wisest person in school matters with whom he had come in contact in any way .... Contact with her supplemented Dewey's educational ideas where his own experience was lacking in matters of practical administration, crystallizing his ideas of democracy in the school and, by extension, in life."<sup>48</sup>

#### Graduation

During the summer of 1900, on a "blistering hot day," Ella defended her dissertation for the Ph.D. "We were garbed in cap and gown and sitting about the long table in impressive style," she recalled later. "I took off my cap and said I guessed it would be safe on the table, and then slipped my gown back onto the back of my chair. My act, though a breach of the dignity of the occasion, at least made me much more comfortable for the prolonged questioning of the august committee."<sup>49</sup> Her thesis was entitled "Isolation in School Systems."<sup>50</sup> It embodied her philosophy of education from method to administration and organization. It was the synthesis of her practical experiences and theory, and it had been long in conception. As early as March, 1896 she had addressed the University Pedagogical Club on the very same topic.<sup>51</sup>

In essence, this educational philosophy emphasized fluidity and reflection in thought processes, learning as a reconstruction of experiences, and social freedom through a democratically run administration from superintendent to student.

The thesis defense apparently went well, but at graduation Ella got a small surprise. Her name appeared in the honors list under magna cum laude. She had been led to expect summa. She had a conference with Harper the substance of which was not recorded. A few days later she wrote him a brief letter:

My Dear President Harper: -

I am wondering over my attaching such a great importance to the difference in the value of "magna" and "summa." My friends may be disappointed for the moment, but their final estimate of me cannot be affected by either term. I deeply regret taking your time last Thursday. Saturday, I called upon Dr. Dewey and Dean Judson to state my calmer point of view. Since making those calls, I have learned that the person who brought me the published account of the awards of honor, should have informed me that such a public statement has been made once only, in January of this year.<sup>52</sup>

A short time later, Dr. Ella Flagg Young was promoted from Associate Professional Lecturer to Professor of Education.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps she expected to spend the remainder of her professional career in the quadrangles of the University of Chicago. However, even as she graduated a set of events were already in motion that would lead four years later to her resignation.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Robert Herrick, Chimes (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 1. This novel, by a man who spent many years teaching literature at the University of Chicago, gives a fictional account of the early years of the University. Richard J. Storr, Harper's University: The Beginnings (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966) gives a more objective account, but one which generally supports the impressions in Chimes.

<sup>2</sup>Ella F. Young to William Rainey Harper, 2 December 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 54, Folder 25, Archives, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Ill.

<sup>3</sup>Membership Record, Corresponding Secretary, Chicago Women's Club, p. 70. Chicago Women's Club Papers, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois. Ella was elected to membership January 11, 1888 (name of sponsor not given). She was transferred to honorary membership (complimentary) in 1911.

<sup>4</sup>Storr gives a balanced account of both Harper and the University. Thomas Wakefield Goodspeed, William Rainey Harper: First President of the University of Chicago (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1928) is a sympathetic account by a colleague who felt close to Harper.

<sup>5</sup>Herrick, p. 24, uses the term "Barnum's Show."

<sup>6</sup>Storr, pp. 18-34; 363-67. Goodspeed, pp. 201-24.

<sup>7</sup>Storr, pp. 200-201.

<sup>8</sup>Robert L. McCaul, "Dewey's Chicago," School Review 67 (Summer 1959): 258-59; George Dykhuizen, The Life and Mind of John Dewey (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), pp. 76-77.

<sup>9</sup>Storr, pp. 70-77.

<sup>10</sup>Dykuizen, p. 77.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, pp. 44-75.

<sup>12</sup>Milton Halsey Thomas and Herbert Wallace Schneider, A Bibliography of John Dewey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), pp. 3-12; Fredson Bowers and Jo Ann Boydston, eds., John Dewey: The Early Works, 1882-1898 5 vols. (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1972). Note that Boydston (3: xiii-xvii) demonstrates persuasively that Dewey had no part in writing Applied Psychology (with J. A. McLellan), a book which appeared with Dewey's name listed as co-author about the time he was interviewing for the Chicago position.



<sup>13</sup> McCaul, p. 259.

<sup>14</sup> Storr, p. 74; McCaul, p. 259; Dewey to Harper, 15 February and 19 March 1894, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph M. Rice, "The Public Schools of Chicago and St. Paul," The Forum 15 (1893): 200-215.

<sup>16</sup> Parker had long been known in education, but Rice's article (ibid.) brought much favorable national attention to Parker as a reformer. See also Jack K. Campbell, Colonel Francis W. Parker: The Children's Crusader (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967), pp. 161-64.

<sup>17</sup> "Teaching Ethics in the High School," Educational Review 6 (November 1893): 313-21; "Education and the Health of Women," Science 6 (16 October 1885): 341-42; "Health and Sex in Higher Education," Popular Science Monthly 28 (March 1886): 606-14. See Thomas and Schneider, pp. 3-12 and Milton H. Thomas, John Dewey: A Centennial Bibliography (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 1-10.

<sup>18</sup> Martha Furber Nelson, comp., Index by Authors, Titles, and Subjects to the Publications of the National Educational Association for Its First Fifty Years, 1857 to 1906 (Winona, Minn.: The Association, 1907), p. 51. Dewey gave his first paper in 1897.

<sup>19</sup> John Dewey to William James, 19 December 1903, cited in Ralph Barton Perry, ed., The Thought and Character of William James, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1935), 2: 525.

<sup>20</sup> John Dewey to John T. McManis, v.d., printed in John T. McManis, Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1916), pp. 120-21.

<sup>21</sup> Max Eastman, Heroes I Have Known (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942), p. 300.

<sup>22</sup> Dewey to Harper, 1 March 1898, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 30, Folder 24.

<sup>23</sup> Rosemary Donatelli, "The Contributions of Ella Flagg Young to the Educational Enterprise" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago Microfilms, T22517, 1971), p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> The Teachers College and its place in Harper's plans for extension are described by Storr, pp. 199-201.

<sup>25</sup> John Evans, "A Woman at the Head of Chicago's School System," World's Work 18 (September 1909): 11993 leaves the impression that the delay was due to Ella's trying to secure higher rank and salary. Evan's article contains a number of factual inaccuracies; moreover,

the available evidence, sketchy though it is, does not support this conclusion. See Young to Harper, 28 October 1898 and 2 December 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 54, Folder 2; Harper to Young, 25 September 1899, Harper Personal Papers, Archives, University of Chicago Library. These letters suggest the interpretation given in the text of this dissertation.

<sup>26</sup>McManis, p. 110; Young to Harper, 28 October 1898, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Quoted in McManis, pp. 103-104. This is one of several items to which McManis had access that are no longer extant.

<sup>29</sup>Donatelli, p. 145.

<sup>30</sup>McManis, p. 110.

<sup>31</sup>McCaul, p. 259.

<sup>32</sup>McManis, p. 110.

<sup>33</sup>Quoted in a letter from Harper to Young, 25 September 1899, Harper Personal Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Harry P. Judson to John Dewey, 16 November 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 54, Folder 25.

<sup>35</sup>Donatelli, p. 146, assumes Mrs. Young was not teaching in the fall because her name does not appear in the records. Apparently, the courses she taught were listed in the records under Dewey's name. Cf. The University of Chicago, The President's Report: Administration, 1st Ser. The Decennial Publications 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1903): 148-49, and Young to Harper, 2 December 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925.

<sup>36</sup>Dewey to Harper, 16 November 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925.

<sup>37</sup>Herrick, pp. 23, 64.

<sup>38</sup>Young to Harper, 2 December 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. Some years later, a story (probably apocryphal) was published to the effect that shortly after she had begun teaching the course she met President Harper and asked 'By the way...do you mind my serving coffee at class?' His reply was 'Bless you, no,...I wish I had some of it.' Evans, p. 11993.

<sup>40</sup>Young to Harper, 2 December 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid. The downtown center was started the following year at the Fine Arts Building, 203 Michigan Avenue (The President's Report, 1st Ser., The Decennial Publications 1: 147). Edmund J. James was in charge of this program when Ella taught in it. Ten years later, as President of the University of Illinois, he would confer an honorary doctorate upon her.

<sup>42</sup>Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards, The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago, 1896-1903 (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1936), pp. 3-19, gives a brief history of the school.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 7; Storr, pp. 297-301; Dykhuizen, pp. 87-88. Dewey's conception of the school as a practice school is in Reginald D. Archambault, ed., Lectures in the Philosophy of Education: 1899 by John Dewey (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. xxv, 364).

<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Storr, p. 298.

<sup>45</sup>Ella Flagg Young, "Democracy in Education," Journal of Education 84 (6 July 1916): 6.

<sup>46</sup>Young to Harper, 2 December 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925.

<sup>47</sup>McManis, p. 120.

<sup>48</sup>Jane M. Dewey, ed., "Biography of John Dewey," in Paul Arthur Schlipp, ed., The Philosophy of John Dewey. The Library of Living Philosophies, vol. 1, 2d Edition (LaSalle, Ill.: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1951): 29.

<sup>49</sup>McManis, pp. 110-11.

<sup>50</sup>When the thesis appeared in print the title was Isolation in the School, the Contributions to Education 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1901).

<sup>51</sup>Donatelli, p. 402.

<sup>52</sup>Young to Harper, 24 June 1900, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 71, Folder 2.

<sup>53</sup>In Dewey's budget request to Harper of 21 December 1889 (Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 30, Folder 24) he said:

Regarding the matter of the Pedagogical Department, I do not see that specific recommendations can be made until the future status of Mrs. Ella F. Young is decided. As I have received the request for material for the next program to be sent in by January 15, it would seem advisable to have this matter adjusted as soon as possible. I need hardly express a formal recommendation that she be appointed to an Associate Professorship. If that is done, the department will be upon an excellent working basis for next year.

There is no evidence that Mrs. Young accepted this appointment until she graduated, at which time it apparently became a full professorship.

## CHAPTER 6.

## THE PITFALLS OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

In the summer quarter after her graduation, Ella taught three courses -- "Positive and Negative Factors in Education," "A Study of the Parts of the School System," and "Fundamental Principles Underlying 19th Century Theories of Education." After a fall quarter vacation, she returned to teach "Experimental Education" and to enroll in Dewey's seminar in Greek logic. During the next three years, the remainder of her time at the University of Chicago, Ella taught several courses in University College (the old Teachers College renamed and expanded to include other extension work) and offered an incredible variety of courses on campus in the departments of Education and Philosophy.<sup>1</sup> From the summer of 1900 to the spring of 1904, she taught seventeen different graduate and undergraduate courses, some more than once. Their content included, in addition to the items listed above, methods of all major subject areas taught in the elementary school, secondary teaching and management issues, educational reform, educational psychology, supervision techniques, and educational classics.<sup>2</sup>

## Stylistic Differences

Ella's teaching style was in many ways the reverse of Dewey's. "Her great power lay in her ability to draw out her students and make them take stands on questions at issue," said John McManis who was in her classes at the time. "In her questions she cut both to the heart

of the matter in hand and to the deepest and often hitherto unexpressed beliefs of her students," he added.<sup>3</sup> An unnamed student was later quoted as having said, "Do you know that the work I had with Mrs. Young carried farther into practical teaching and administration than anything I took at the University?" She did not lecture and did not "set up her own opinion or position between the student and the subject itself," but her work "was always effective." McManis attributed her "stimulating power" to

her democratic respect and faith in each person ... or, as someone else has put it, in her power to make each one believe in himself. Each felt called upon to do his best and felt his power to do the subject justice. All this ... [came] from her power to present the subject in a way that compelled the student to lose himself in it as it opened up under the leadership of an active mind and spirit.<sup>4</sup>

She had not lost her ability to lecture effectively, however. Mrs. Albert Mead of Tucson, Arizona, remembered her speech to a group of high school seniors in Avoca, Iowa in 1902. "Probably she was the first good woman speaker I had ever heard because my impression is still vivid, after more than sixty-five years, of her confidence, enthusiasm, and radiant personality." She gave "an inspiring vision of the privilege and mission of the profession of teaching."<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, Dewey's classes usually had little discussion, except when Ella was in them and engaged him in dialogue. "Questions from the floor were not exactly discouraged, but they were not invited," according to Harold Larrabee who had courses from him.<sup>6</sup> W. W. Charters remembered a summer class from Dewey in 1901 as difficult because "Dewey was still fumbling his way from his earlier Hegelian

psychology to his later pragmatism."<sup>7</sup> Dewey was not a dynamic lecturer.

He remained seated throughout the hour and seldom seemed to be looking directly at his audience. Often he would turn in his chair and glance sideways, as if half looking out the window and half absorbed in his private thoughts. His facial expression was solemn.<sup>8</sup>

Though most of Dewey's students found him courteous, he apparently never totally discarded the qualities which had lead an undergraduate at Michigan to characterize him as "cold, impersonal, psychological, sphinx-like, anomalous and petrifying to flunkers."<sup>9</sup>

Despite differences in style and approach, Professors Young and Dewey worked harmoniously in many areas, and the two of them, along with Professors Mead, Angell, Moore and Tufts, were hard at work on a series of publications, issued in 1902-1903 as part of the University's Decennial celebration.<sup>10</sup> The Contributions to Philosophy and Contributions to Education were the chief basis for a letter from William James to the English philosopher F. C. S. Schiller to the effect that

...it appears now that, under Dewey's inspiration, they have at [the University of ] Chicago a flourishing school of radical empiricism of which I for one have been entirely ignorant, having been led to neglect its utterances by their lack of 'terseness,' 'crispness,' 'raciness' and other 'newspaporial' virtues, though I could discern that Dewey himself was laboring with a big freight toward the light.<sup>11</sup>

While this intellectual activity was exciting and important, it was overshadowed at the time by political and personal events within the University which would eventuate in the spring of 1904 in resignations from both Professors Dewey and Young. The storm was already building by 1901 and was in full force by the time James apprised Schiller of Dewey's "lumbering toward the light." Although the

difficulties were in no sense of Ella's making, she was directly involved in helping Dewey in what turned out to be for him a personal power struggle. He lost, or at least felt he did, and departed for Columbia. Ella, tired of the petty academic squabbles and identified with the losing side of the fight, also resigned and took an extended trip to Europe.

To explain Ella's involvement in the events of 1901-1904, it will be useful to recall Harper's ambitions for the university over which he presided; to examine the final three years of the career of Francis Wayland Parker; and to notice Dewey's response to a series of actions involving Harper and Parker, specifically to Harper's bringing Colonel Parker to the faculty of the University of Chicago.

#### Colonel Parker and the Chicago Institute

Francis Wayland Parker was already well known when he arrived in Chicago to be principal of the Cook County Normal School in 1883. He had grown up under trying circumstances in New Hampshire. His father died early, leaving him to be apprenticed to a farmer. He attended district school eight weeks each winter while he learned to appreciate nature and history from his farm experiences. When he was sixteen, he took a job teaching district school, including taking part of his pay by "boarding round." In 1859 (the year John Dewey was born) Parker moved to Carrollton, Illinois where he successfully managed a "tough" school that had driven off the two teachers who had preceded him. When the Civil War broke out, Parker (then twenty-four), enlisted as



a private in the Fourth New Hampshire Regiment. By the end of the conflict, he was a colonel and was usually referred to as Colonel Parker during the rest of his life.<sup>12</sup>

After the war, Parker spent two years studying schools and educational theory in Germany and was much affected by the ideas of Pestalozzi, Froebel and Herbart. Soon after his return to the United States, he secured a job as school superintendent in Quincy, Massachusetts where the Adamses and Quincys lived. He became a controversial figure there because of his advocacy of the "new learning." Identified as a school reformer, he was soon noted for his opposition to excessive memory work and for favoring an experience oriented, child-centered curriculum. From Quincy he moved to Boston where he stirred additional controversy in a contest with the "old-guard" school masters led by Superintendent John D. Philbrick.<sup>13</sup> During this time he met and married Mary Frances Stuart, a well-educated woman of extraordinary talents who was to teach with him and help in many ways, including socially, during the rest of his career.<sup>14</sup>

By the time the Parkers left Boston for Chicago, the "Quincy method," like Parker, was nationally known, though not universally approved. He was controversial in Chicago, too, but he always managed to keep enough support on the board of education to retain his job. He and his wife moved easily in some of Chicago's more respectable social circles, despite the Colonel's eccentricities. He looked for and secured talented and hard-working teachers who were as loyal to him as his critics were opposed. As noted earlier, Parker received another national "boost" when Joseph Mayer Rice cited his Cook County Normal

operation as approaching an "educational ideal." Parker, "who, as is almost too well known to require mention, has done as much if not more than any other single person to spread the doctrine of the new education throughout our country," said the reform-minded journalist.<sup>15</sup>

In 1896 the Cook County Normal School was offered to the City of Chicago and, after some stalling and debate, the board accepted the offer. The city was still suffering under Rice's rebuke that "the qualifications of the teachers appointed in Chicago were far below those in New York and Philadelphia — cities about which he had few favorable observations to report."<sup>16</sup> William Rainey Harper had just been appointed to the board of education in 1896. He supported Parker's move and he may have then started privately trying to lure Parker to the University of Chicago.<sup>17</sup> If so, Parker was not interested, but two years later things had changed.

By the spring of 1898 opposition to Parker had grown so strong that his reelection as principal was in serious doubt.<sup>18</sup> He had already decided to accept the offer of Mrs. Emmons Blaine (née Anita McCormick, daughter of Cyrus McCormick of the reaper fame and fortune). Mrs. Blaine was a young and very wealthy widow — her husband, the son of Senator James G. Blaine, had died in 1892 — and she had a strong social conscience. Her son had attended Parker's school, and she was a friend of Mrs. Parker from their mutual work in the Chicago Women's Club.<sup>19</sup> Anita Blaine believed in the Colonel's approach to education and offered to set him up in a private operation where his opponents on the board of education would not be able to get at him. At first he refused, but by the summer of 1898 he was growing tired of fighting with

Mayor Harrison and other opponents. The board that summer demoted his (and Ella's) old friend Albert Lane to assistant superintendent and put President Harper's friend E. Benjamin Andrews in his place. Parker would not have been reelected as principal of the Normal School had it not been for a tactical blunder by one of Harrison's men.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, Parker learned that summer that his wife, who had been his constant companion in the battle, was dying of cancer. By the following spring she was gone, and he had decided to accept the Blaine offer.<sup>21</sup>

Parker set out to establish with Mrs. Blaine's money a school for poor children in a south side slum and a model teacher training institution on the fashionable north shore. Fourteen teachers exited with him from the Chicago Normal to high salaried positions in the promising venture. This was in June 1899, at the same time Ella resigned from the Chicago schools. Ella was suggested as a valuable addition to the staff, but she had already accepted the "assistant professional lecturer" position at the University.<sup>22</sup>

Subsequent events would have been entirely different except for two things: William Rainey Harper's ambitions, and Anita Blaine's inability to withstand pressure from her family and financial advisors. Her heart was with Parker's school, but some of her advisors did not share her enthusiasm for the "new education."<sup>23</sup> After a year of planning, the Chicago Institute (the name adopted for the model school) opened in rented quarters, with scaled down plans, due to pressure from Mrs. Blaine's advisors. They wanted to spend less than

the original plans had stipulated. This provided a perfect entree for President Harper.

#### President Harper and the Institute

In building the great university which he envisioned, there were two things for which Harper was constantly on the lookout: one was money to endow salaries for the growing faculty and other expensive operations; the other was talent — famous talent, people with national and international reputations in their fields.<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Blaine's endowment of the Chicago Institute offered him the possibility for a coup in both areas. If he could bring the Institute to the University, he would pick up more than one million dollars in endowment, an outstanding faculty already assembled, and the most famous School reformer in America to head it up. Such a move would make the University of Chicago instantly competitive with the new Teachers College in New York.<sup>25</sup>

Actually, the merger was not very difficult for Harper to engineer. He was noted for his persuasiveness, but far more important was the fact that Mrs. Blaine was on the University of Chicago board of trustees already. Harper knew that Institute's board members — men who were already nervous about Colonel Parker's expensive plans and who would like to turn the worry over to someone else. They advised Mrs. Blaine to accept the merger; she had apparently learned that one should not go against what powerful men thought best.<sup>26</sup> Harper offered the Institute faculty tenure in a rising institution, one which promised

great things for the future. Parker was never convinced that joining the university was wise, but after his wife's death he had lost much of his old fight. He acquiesced when it appeared that most of his faculty wanted to merge.<sup>27</sup> By early 1901 tentative agreements had been reached. A short time later, the problems began. This is the general background against which John Dewey's reactions and against which later developments must be viewed. A more detailed enumeration of events follows.

#### Dewey's Response

Soon after Dewey's arrival in Chicago he met Parker. Two of Dewey's children attended primary school at the Normal over which Parker was principal. The Colonel was favorably impressed with Dewey, inviting him to give a series of lectures at the Cook County Normal. On other occasions Parker complimented Dewey's thought and assumed the two were warriors in a common cause. In return Dewey was amiable, perhaps even impressed that so famous a man as Parker would be complimentary to a young and as yet, little-known professor. Parker was no doubt glad to find another kindred spirit — the more help the better in changing what he regarded as outmoded educational practice.<sup>28</sup> On Dewey's side, however, competitiveness showed quite early. Dewey took the occasion of a letter to the Chicago Evening Post, ostensibly in support of the Chicago school board's accepting the Cook County Normal into the city system, to pledge his own efforts "as head of the pedagogical department of the university, to any and every cooperation possible to helping

the public schools of Chicago through the instrumentality of a training school." This was at the very time when Dewey was starting his own "Lab School." His carefully worded letter mentioned the possibility of the Normal's being a source of the "greatest benefit or the greatest harm to Chicago schools." He suggested the school board should "consult with educational experts" to find out how the school could be of benefit.<sup>29</sup> The implicit conclusion -- that the Normal as it was currently run was not beneficial -- was the very claim Parker's critics had been making for years.

Dewey's own school, however, had problems (see pp. 87-89). Harper had been encouraging to Dewey about the school, but he had always insisted that it should become financially self-sufficient as quickly as possible. Dewey accepted these conditions at first, but later resented them and suggested that Rockefeller should be approached for money. Harper already had all the problems he could handle in getting money from "The Founder." He told Dewey the trustees would probably want to abolish the school if they heard such talk.<sup>30</sup> This exchange was in March 1899 when rumors of Parker's coming to the University of Chicago were already circulating.

In March 1899 John Dewey asked President Harper to have the University take over funding of his private elementary school. Harper refused.<sup>31</sup> In May the papers announced Parker's resignation from the Normal to accept Mrs. Blaine's offer of a private institute.<sup>32</sup> By August Harper was helping Dewey raise money for his "pedagogical laboratory."<sup>33</sup> He even gave \$100 himself toward the drive. Quite possibly he had decided at this point that he was not going to land

the Colonel and his large endowment. A little more than three months later, Ella wrote to President Harper that she and Dr. Dewey were conferring about ways to improve the school.<sup>34</sup> Anita Blaine provided money to subsidize the publication of Dewey's The School and Society (1899), and the year closed on a calm note.<sup>35</sup> But things would not remain tranquil for long.

By the summer of 1900, "the first flush of expansive -- and expensive -- planning" for the Parker-Blaine model school were beginning to disturb Mrs. Blaine's advisors.<sup>36</sup> Parker and his faculty returned from a well-paid sabbatical planning year to some harsh realities. The site had cost more than originally projected, plans for the building (including two swimming pools, and astronomical observatory, and a large theater) had gotten a little out of hand. In October 1900 the Chicago Institute opened in a rented building with one-third the enrollments that had been planned. Emanuel R. Boyer, the man who was to have been Director of the Institute (to take care of administrative details) died, leaving Parker to be director instead of "President." Mrs. Blaine's advisors (the Institute's trustees) were constantly after Parker to cut costs.<sup>37</sup>

By the winter of 1900-1901 merger talk was going in earnest. Parker was opposed, but in the final analysis he probably had little choice. Mrs. Blaine had been convinced by her advisors and by President Harper that it was best. Harper asked key members of the University of Chicago faculty to write Parker assuring him of their interest in having the Institute come to the university. Quite a number did, but Dewey was not one of them.<sup>38</sup>

In February 1901, Harper, Parker, Dewey and Wilbur S. Jackman signed a preliminary agreement to provide for the merger. Jackman, a Harvard graduate, was Parker's second in command. The agreement stipulated that Parker would be Director of the Institute, which would be renamed the School of Education with Jackman as dean. The departments of pedagogy and philosophy would remain under Dewey's control. Elementary education would be in Parker's charge; secondary education, in the form of an academy and a manual training school already controlled by the University, would be under Dewey's charge. This was the agreement, but it was not enough to ward off trouble.<sup>39</sup>

#### Two University Elementary Schools

For Dewey's additional duties as head of the two secondary schools, Harper suggested a twenty percent raise from \$5,000 to \$6,000. (Parker had originally been getting \$8,000, but he was cut to about \$6,000 in the merger.) In early April, Dewey demanded \$7,000 instead of the proposed increase to \$6,000. Harper reluctantly consented.<sup>40</sup> By late April some of the parents of children in Dewey's elementary school called upon Harper expressing concern that the children might be harmed in the merger of Dewey's school with Parker's. Harper reassured them and explained his reasons: 1) Dewey had enough to do without supervising the elementary school; 2) there were not enough children for two schools; 3) the school had always operated in the red; and 4) not to merge the two would be an act of bad faith toward Parker and his staff. The parents group replied that 1) Dewey said he could "easily" supervise



the two secondary schools, the elementary school, and attend to his departmental duties; 2) there were enough children; and 3) they would raise \$2,500 to \$5,000 per year to offset the deficit.<sup>41</sup>

To reinforce the campaign, Dewey enlisted the aid of some of his colleagues - B. A. Hinsdale, Professor of Education at the University of Michigan, and thirteen other educators. Harper was probably not much impressed when the fourteen letters arrived in his office, all within days of each other, asking that Dewey's school be retained. He knew how much interest educators had expressed in the Dewey school and to that point it had not been overwhelming.<sup>42</sup>

The Dewey school parent group continued its protest to Harper, having heard from someone in the Dewey school staff (perhaps Dewey's wife, Alice who taught and was acting principal of the school) how different Dewey's school was in aim and purpose from Parker's. A meeting was arranged at which President Harper "undertook to satisfy the parents ... who were much distressed." Laura Runyon, a member of the Dewey school staff, remembered the night meeting (so fathers could attend) as "quite a thrilling time." According to her account,

the schoolroom was packed and reporters were barred. Dr. Dewey could not be there because of illness in his family. After Dr. Harper had made his address, Mrs. Ella Flagg Young replied to him on behalf of the parents, in a plea for the continuance of the school. I took down her address in shorthand and transcribed it for Dr. Dewey. I don't know whether he still has it, but it explained the difference between his school and that of Colonel Parker, and was chiefly responsible for the continuance of the school.<sup>43</sup>

Harper checked with Mrs. Blaine and Colonel Parker. Katharine M. Stilwell, head of the Latin Department in Parker's school, remembered twenty-five years later that the Colonel said "let him keep his little

school, we can't have too many schools of this kind."<sup>44</sup> The original compromise was amended to allow the Dewey school to continue, but the Parker elementary school was listed as the University Elementary School, the name which Dewey's school had been using. Whether it was at this point or earlier that Ella suggested the name "Laboratory School" is not clear. In any case, Dewey was not happy with the change. He wrote President Harper an angry letter claiming that inquiries about the university elementary school were receiving information about the Parker school when they should have been getting material about his school. The President's response was probably no great comfort to Dewey. He had the letterhead changed to read "The University Elementary School on the Blaine Foundation," and added Colonel Parker's name.<sup>45</sup>

Dewey could not very well attack Parker himself, but he did write condescending letters to the new Dean of Education, Wilbur S. Jackman, and sent irritated letters to Harper about Jackman.

By the time the fall 1901 session was underway, feeling was very strained. The University had not matched the Blaine endowment as it was originally to have done. Parker and his faculty had taken salary cuts.<sup>46</sup> To crown the injuries, Dewey was insisting that he should have for secondary instruction the space which had originally been designated for an assembly hall. Of all the space in the proposed building, this was the most dear to the Parker faculty and was at the heart of Colonel Parker's plans. When Jackman tried to keep to some of the original space designs, however, Dewey called his efforts "too absurd to receive serious attention." When Jackman began to work directly with Harper on plans for the new building, Dewey complained that he

was not being kept informed about the plans.<sup>47</sup> Parker's health began to fail, and by winter he had left for the South to recuperate.

Dewey had apparently decided that his best course was to push Harper for what he could get, and events had so far made this approach look useful. Part of this push included Dewey's naming his wife Alice to the principalship of his elementary school at an annual salary of \$1,250.<sup>48</sup> He had slipped this action by, as it were, by including it in a last minute budget. He hurriedly submitted it in the summer of 1901 immediately prior to leaving for California to teach summer school at Berkeley. Ella wrote Dewey telling him that President Harper was not happy about the situation. Dewey wrote to Harper, saying that he had been too busy getting ready for his trip to California to consult Harper. He said his wife had "accepted the position only after protest and with much reluctance, and wished me to express her desire for a readjustment if you see anything to object to in the matter."<sup>49</sup> Harper let the appointment stand, but he must have wondered when four months later, in answer to an inquiry to Dewey about children who were paying no tuition in the Laboratory School, Dewey had replied that two of his own children did not pay, since Mrs. Dewey gave full time to the school for a salary of only \$500!<sup>50</sup>

#### The Merger of the Elementary Schools

Colonel Parker, who had left because of ill health, did not get better. On March 2, 1902 he died, leaving the office of director open. By the terms of the merger agreement, the trustees of the Blaine

Foundation were to nominate his successor.<sup>51</sup> They interviewed both Dewey and Wilbur Jackman for the position and talked to both faculties. Dewey assured the trustees that he would give the director's job all the time it needed.<sup>52</sup> President Harper must have known that Dewey would be highly offended if Jackman got the job; quite likely he hoped that if Dewey were put in charge, he would no longer feel threatened and that things would settle down. On May 20, 1902 Dewey was nominated as director. He accepted, but the situation did not improve.<sup>53</sup>

Having won the battle for control — even if by a stroke of fate — Dewey did nothing to conciliate the Parker staff. He refused to attend faculty meetings unless he had a "point to urge."<sup>54</sup> Within a short time of his appointment, Dewey confessed to Anita Blaine that "administrative work is just not in my line," but he did not offer to step down.<sup>55</sup> On his assessment of his administrative talent, he would have found a good deal of agreement. Harper told him that one of his budget expenditures was too high; the president's secretary was critical of the way in which he handled inquiries about the elementary school; and his failure to prepare a circular for it. Dewey was upset with Jackman for using his name on an announcement of a parents meeting. This apparently represented an effort on Jackman's part to get Dewey to attend a parent's meeting — or perhaps Jackman merely assumed that Dewey would attend. Dewey wrote Jackman that "If such a matter ever occurs again, I shall take it upon myself to print and send to everyone concerned a statement that an unauthorized use has been made of my name." Jackman, who had already been criticized by Dewey in front of faculty members, wrote back an apology, saying he would have preferred that

Dewey treat the matter as a mistake to be remedied rather than as an offense to be punished.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps in irritation over this incident, Dr. and Mrs. Dewey refused to attend a faculty-parent party in celebration of Washington's birthday, an event of long tradition with the Parker faculty and parents. The teacher in charge of arrangements came crying to Jackman's office declaring "There's no use trying."<sup>57</sup>

By the end of the school year Jackman expressed his views of the year's conflicts to Harper. In a letter to him he said that Dewey had not taken a direct hand in working out the school's program with the faculty. Instead, he seemed to be indifferent and disinterested, mostly siding with newer members versus older members who were expressing the Parker viewpoint. This started the fragmentation of a unified faculty into cliques. When the Parker faculty expressed opposition to anything Dewey wanted, Jackman continued, he would resort to the threat of resignation (so much so that it became a standing joke with the Institute staff). This did "a good deal to lower in their opinion the dignity it was probably supposed to maintain." He had also neglected the parents of the Institute's elementary school and the splendid rapport" that once existed among parents faculty and administrator was quickly deteriorating.<sup>58</sup>

The ultimate battle lines were drawn at about the time of Jackman's report to Harper. Dewey had decided, he told Mrs. Blaine, that the time had come to merge the two elementary schools. His reasons were substantially the same as those given by Harper two years earlier, i.e., he was too busy, there were not enough pupils for two schools, the schools were substantially alike, etc. Dewey let Zonia Baber and

Emily Rice, the only two Parker teachers with whom he consulted regularly, understand that when the merger was finished, he intended to appoint his wife as principal and to cut the salaries of the Parker teachers. Most of the Parker teachers threatened to resign if Alice Dewey were appointed principal. This may well have been what Dewey hoped for, since all the teachers who had moved with the Institute had tenure as a result of the original agreement under which the merger occurred.<sup>59</sup>

Misses Baber and Rice communicated their misgivings to Mrs. Blaine who, in turn, asked Dewey what was going on. When she told Dewey how upset and opposed the Parker faculty was, he expressed surprise, disappointment and chagrin. He said he never would have suggested Mrs. Dewey's name if he'd known of the opposition. However, when he talked with Emily Rice a little later and she told him that Mrs. Blaine was opposed to the appointment, he said his authority as director was being questioned and that the matter had now gone too far to change.<sup>60</sup>

As Dewey proceeded with the merger and the appointment of Mrs. Dewey as principal (at a raise in salary to \$2,500), Mrs. Blaine wrote to President Harper that "unless Mrs. Dewey fills the office of Grade Principal to everyone's satisfaction, (which seems to us hardly possible under the circumstances) her occupation will be brief."<sup>61</sup> Probably to save embarrassment and a public scene, Harper allowed the merger and the appointment to go through, but gave Dewey to understand that it would be Mrs. Dewey's "pleasure to withdraw from the principalship at some time not fixed, but presumably within the year covered by the appointment."<sup>62</sup>

Dewey, having won every round so far in the struggle, must have decided that Harper could be pushed indefinitely. He continued tactics which seem to have been designed to get rid of the Parker faculty. He disapproved of every proposal that Flora J. Cooke made to him. Flora Cooke was principal of the Francis Wayland Parker School, a private elementary school on the original site for those well-to-do north side parents who had sent their children to the Institute before the merger. Dewey was nominally over this school in his role as Director. He had strongly approved of Flora Cook's methods when he first came to Chicago. Two of his children had attended her classes before his own elementary school was started. Now he told her her ideas were not practical.<sup>63</sup>

#### Staying out of the Fight

<sup>a</sup>  
Ella had helped Dewey with the "Laboratory School" in 1899-1900; she had helped him maintain its independence during the first merger talks; and she had warned him that President Harper was not happy about Mrs. Dewey's having been appointed to the Lab School principalship. These activities identified her as part of the Dewey faction, but what she thought as matters went from bad to worse is not on record. She remained cordial to both the Deweys but the little evidence now available indicates that she found the fight unnecessary and a bother.<sup>64</sup>

Ella did catch the brunt of a little of the "curbstone politics" in the editing of the Elementary School Teacher. The journal came with the Institute and was originally intended as an organ in which the Institute's staff would record for each other, for parents, and for

anyone else who wanted to know, the substance of their evolving curriculum. Indeed, its original title was to have been The Course of Study.<sup>65</sup> After the move to the University, the name changed to the Elementary School Teacher, but the Parker faculty had the same content in mind as before the move. Parker's death brought the journal under Dewey's control. He hoped to make the journal a vehicle for articles from both inside and outside the University faculty. He asked Ella ("I was assigned the work," is the way she put it) to become managing editor and accomplish this task.<sup>66</sup> She accepted the job, without any reduction in work-load and without any credit to her in the journal.

At about the same time President Harper wrote asking her to teach more extension work. "I wish you were not so popular as you seem to be," he wrote on September 28, 1903:

The case becomes extremely embarrassing when everybody is fighting to secure your services. I have just written Mr. Dewey that it was my distinct understanding when you came into the University that we should be able to make use of your services, in small part at least, in connection with the University College. I have always wanted you to help us keep in touch with the teachers of the city in this way. I have therefore asked Mr. Dewey to take up the matter and to arrange the work of the department in such a way as that we may be able to continue this most valuable course in the University College.

Just over a month later, Harper apparently sent a pointed note in reference to Ella's editing the Elementary School Teacher. Her reply, dated November 7, not only gives an indication of the fights that were going on within the new college of education but of her reaction to it:



My dear President Harper,

Upon my return from the meeting of the Northern Illinois Teachers' Association, I found your note of Nov. 6 awaiting me. Before presenting a sketch of the anomalous position I hold in the Elementary School Teacher, I will state that I will be responsible for the prompt deposit of MSS and the return of paged proofs for that journal from the Dec. to the June numbers inclusive.

In the interview in which I was assigned the work of managing the journal, I stated definitely that I could have nothing to do with the Nov. issue. There is no doubt that the Director and the Dean are together responsible for the material now in the galley proofs of that number.

I have been busy collecting the MSS for Dec., having the Index for Vol. III prepared, and hunting up the right people to review some books. With the exception of two articles which I am assured will be in my possession Monday morning, I have been ready for days, to deposit the Dec. material with the Press.

The tone of the President's note of Nov. 6 surprises me, somewhat. The facts as to the managing editor's position are as follows: (a) In June '03, I wrote the President that knowing I did not hold an appointive position, but as he had written me in the summer of '02 that he was pleased to learn I was willing to help about the work on the El. Sch. Teacher, I thought it official courtesy to notify him of the discontinuance of my work on that journal; (b) the President did not acknowledge the receipt of my note, but he did write the Director, virtually relieving me of any connection with the journal; (c) In August '03, upon motion of Miss Rice the faculty of the School of Education unanimously voted to ask Mrs. Dewey to become the Editor of the El. Sch. Tr. I learned recently, that Mrs. Dewey, acting upon the expressed wishes of the faculty, wrote and secured promise of contributions from notable people; (d) the Director, because of the uncertainty of the kind of support the magazine would receive from all the faculty, advised Mrs. Dewey to decline the editorship. She declined it; (e) the Director thus tendered the position to the Dean who seemed to want it but endeavored to get from the Director the written endorsement of his (the Dean's) policy. Failing of this, he declined the position; (f) Mrs. Young was called in, and required to resume the work; (g) upon planning the work for the remainder of the year, Mrs. Young met with cordial cooperation from the faculty but also discovered that the Dean's idea of making it (the journal) an organ of the school was the fundamental idea in the plans of the faculty. [Then] having secured a stenographer and

outlined the work carefully, Mrs. Young proposed to the President that the managing editorship be offered the Dean again - and upon the President's suggestion she called upon the Dean; (h) The Dean accepted the proposition, not hesitatingly but with alacrity and expressions of pleasure and appreciation. A few days later, he called the faculty together and had a discussion of their plans for the journal. But, between the objections of Miss Rice to his undertaking the additional work and his dismay upon finding the November galley-proofs which the Director had transferred back to his office, the Dean forgot his expressions of pleasure and said (so I am informed) that he merely stepped into the breach when I called upon him; (i) The Director has nominated Miss Rice for the position of managing editor; (j) the Dean has stated in writing to the Director, that Mrs. Young should not be the managing editor; (k) The President has written Mrs. Young that "persons holding office ordinarily continue until their successors are appointed and take up the work."

The present condition of affairs appears to be this: The faculty acting on Miss Rice's motion have expressed the desire that Mrs. Dewey be the managing editor; the Director has expressed the opinion that Mrs. Young should not be managing editor; the President has reproved Mrs. Young for not assuming the duties of the position which the Dean refuses to fill but thinks she should not fill.

Never in my life have I been in an entanglement like this, but as stated in the beginning, I will be responsible for the conduct of the magazine from Dec. until June inclusive, if the President so desires. The suggestion made Oct. 31 by the President to the Director, based on the recognition of the large-mindedness of some managing editors who do their work without recognition on the title page of the journals, will be adopted by me, and the journal will continue to be published without the appearance of my name.

Permit me to say in conclusion, President Harper, that my proposed course in connection with the journal rests solely on my understanding of your idea as to my duty in this matter.

Very truly yours,  
Ella F. Young<sup>67</sup>

By the end of winter, 1903-1904, Dewey's gambit to sweep the Parker faculty out had pretty badly failed. John Duncan, head of the art department, resigned in protest over Dewey's firing a Miss Covington.

Miss Covington had been hired after the move to the University and, therefore, did not get the tenure protection which the original staff received. Duncan wrote Flora Cooke that there "have been great doings at the University School of Education." He said that Miss Covington had done an excellent job but that Dewey had dismissed her, without consulting Duncan, in order to make a place for one of his own teachers. "Speak about the matter to Miss Rice and Miss Baber. They know the situation better than I do, by jabbers, and can give you all the outs and ins of it," he advised.<sup>68</sup> Most of the old Institute faculty stayed, however, and Mrs. Dewey's threat to quit if they did not resign rang hollow in view of the fact that Harper and the trustees expected her to step down anyway.

On March 13, 1904 Dewey left for New York to give a series of lectures at the Brooklyn Institute and at Teachers College (and to interview for a job?). Two weeks later President Harper told Alice Dewey that the time for resigning "at her pleasure" would soon be past. She expressed surprise, saying that her husband had never told her she would have to resign.<sup>69</sup> When Dewey returned a few days later he said he had not told her because he had not understood that she was expected to resign, but this time Harper would not relent.<sup>70</sup> A few days later both the Dewey's sent letters of resignation. Harper made appropriate public pronouncements of "regret," but he wasted little time in getting the University trustees to accept the resignations.

Dewey knew by the time the resignation discussions were over that he was likely to be offered a job at Teachers College.<sup>71</sup> He took a

parting shot at Harper, speaking of a "history of years" in which he said Harper had hampered and embarrassed his work.<sup>72</sup> Harper, who said that under Dewey the School of Education operated at a \$120,000 deficit,<sup>73</sup> wrote President Nicholas Murray Butler of Teachers College on May 5 (before Dewey's last comments): "I am ... grateful to you for relieving us of a very serious difficulty. Sometime I will tell you the whole story."<sup>74</sup>

At about the same time, Ella also resigned. No copy of her letter has been found, and there is no record of her reasons. She apparently stayed on friendly terms with the Dewey's. He wrote for the first issue of the Educational Bi-Monthly which Ella edited a few years later.<sup>75</sup> There is no evidence that they stayed in touch, however. In 1916, when Education and Democracy appeared, Ella wrote a mildly favorable review for the Journal of Education but she stopped short of being genuinely laudatory.<sup>76</sup>

Marion Talbot, pioneer Dean of Women at the University of Chicago (1892-1925), remembered Ella thirty years later as "an outstanding member of the faculty."<sup>77</sup> Press reports at the time said that she declined "a very flattering offer from President Harper if she would remain."<sup>78</sup> Quite possibly the offer was the directorship, a position for which she was obviously qualified. Whatever it was, she was not interested. Probably she was tired of the staff bickering and of the President's periodic appeals to her to bring Chicago teachers to the university. She had long wanted to spend more time in Europe anyway. It must have been a relief to leave the Parker faculty to its own squabbles. She did not know that she would be taking over the headship of

another old Parker faculty before the next year and a half had passed.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Ella is credited with having suggested the change in name from Department of Pedagogy to Department of Education. John T. McManis, Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1916), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>A detailed description of Ella's teaching schedule is given in Rosemary Donatelli, "The Contributions of Ella Flagg Young to the Educational Enterprise" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago Microfilms, #T22617, 1971), p. 147.

<sup>3</sup>McManis, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Donatelli, p. 149 citing a letter of 15 February 1967 from Mead to Donatelli.

<sup>6</sup>H. A. Larrabee, "John Dewey as Teacher, School and Society 86 (10 October 1959): 379. Larrabee had courses from Dewey at Columbia (after this time) but his description of Dewey fits with those of the Chicago period.

<sup>7</sup>Reginald D. Archambault, ed., Lectures in the Philosophy of Education, 1899, by John Dewey (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), p. xxxiv citing a letter of 10 April 1965 from Charters to Archambault.

<sup>8</sup>Larrabee, p. 379. Larrabee's article, which was designed as a tribute to Dewey on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth dwells on Dewey's dullness as a speaker and on his 'lumbering and bumbling' style. He cites Justice Holmes comment on Dewey: 'So, methought, God would have spoken had He been inarticulate, but keenly desirous to tell you how it was.' He quotes William James statement that 'Dewey's style is damnable; you might even say God-damnable!' and Max Eastman's observation that Dewey had written 'a pile twelve feet seven inches high' without one quotable sentence. All this may help account for the fact that Ella's written expression grew more cumbersome and difficult to follow during her Chicago years. Dewey, himself, said she got from her study with him a "terminology" (McManis, p. 120 citing a letter from Dewey, n.d.).

<sup>9</sup>George Dykhuizen, The Life and Mind of John Dewey (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), p. 57 citing the University of Michigan Oracle 21 (1888): 92.

<sup>10</sup>University of Chicago, Investigations Representing the Departments, Part 2 of the Decennial Publications, 1st Ser., 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1903), pp. 5-155.

<sup>11</sup>Gay Wilson Allen, William James: A Biography (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), pp. 435-36 citing James to Schiller, 8 April 1903.

<sup>12</sup>The most complete account of Parker's life and career is Jack K. Campbell, Colonel Francis W. Parker: The Children's Crusader (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967). Shorter accounts are in Merle Curti, The Social Ideas of American Educators (Paterson, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1963), Chap. 11; A. Gordon Melvin, Education: A History (New York: The John Day Company, 1946), pp. 311-27; and Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1867-1957 (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 128-35.

<sup>13</sup>Michael B. Katz, "The New Departure in Quincy, 1875-1881; The Nature of Nineteenth-Century Educational Reform," New England Quarterly 40 (March 1967): 3-30; and "The Emergence of Bureaucracy in American Education: The Boston Case, 1850-1884," History of Education Quarterly 8 (Summer 1968, Fall 1968): 155-88; 319-57.

<sup>14</sup>Mrs. Stuart was described as being "aristocratic to the fingertips by birth." She had been trained in oratory and elocution and was teaching the Delesarte Method at Martha's Vineyard when Parker met her. Campbell, pp. 103-104.

<sup>15</sup>J. M. Rice, The Public-School System of the United States (New York: The Century Co., 1893), p. 210.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>17</sup>Campbell, p. 221.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>19</sup>For information on Anita Blaine see Campbell, pp. 199-201ff. and Robert Eugene Tostberg, "Educational Ferment in Chicago, 1883-1904," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1960, University Microfilms #60-5798), pp. 98-104ff.

<sup>20</sup>Charles S. Thornton, Mayor Harrison's city lawyer, told a board of education member named Otto Gresham that Harrison wanted Lane and Parker out and that if Gresham was intending to vote for either one he must resign. Gresham did resign but gave the story to the press and caused great embarrassment to Harrison. Campbell, pp. 192-93.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>22</sup>Tostberg, p. 114 citing a letter of circa 15 August 1899 from Lucy L. Flower to Mrs. Blaine.

<sup>23</sup>The Institute's trustees were: Stanley McCormick, Anita's brother and a director of the McCormick Harvester Company; Cyrus Bentley, long-time attorney for the company; Owen F. Aldis, attorney and friend of Anita's late husband; and Dr. Henry B. Favill, prominent Chicago physician. The trustees thought some of Parker's ideas, such as simplified spelling, were visionary; they thought both Parker and his deputy, Wilbur Jackman, failed to see the financial parameters of their undertaking. Tostberg, pp. 115-17.

<sup>24</sup>Richard J. Storr, Harper's University: The Beginnings (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 75-83.

<sup>25</sup>Tostberg, pp. 102-14.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-16 citing correspondence between Anita Blaine and her advisors in the papers of Mrs. Emmons Blaine, McCormick Collection, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 119-25; Campbell, p. 223.

<sup>28</sup>Tostberg, p. 127.

<sup>29</sup>Chicago Evening Post, 19 December 1895. Reprinted in Fredson Bowers and Jo Ann Boydston, eds., John Dewey: The Early Works, 1882-1898, 5 vols. (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1972), 5: 423-24.

<sup>30</sup>Storr, p. 299. Dewey may have hoped that Mrs. Blaine would endow his school. In January 1897 he sent her material about the school and invited her to visit. Again in March 1899 a few days after Harper told him the trustees would want to abolish his school if they heard the way he was talking, Dewey sent Mrs. Blaine more information and tickets for herself and others who might be interested in some function. See Robert McCaul, "A Preliminary Listing of Dewey Letters, 1894-1904," School and Society 87 (10 October 1959): 395-99. See items 18, 45.

<sup>31</sup>Storr, p. 299 citing letters of 6 March and 8 March from Dewey to Harper, the latter quoting Harper.

<sup>32</sup>Campbell, p. 208; Tostberg, p. 104.

<sup>33</sup>Storr, p. 299 citing a letter of 15 August from Harper to E. A. Turner.

<sup>34</sup>Supra, pp. 87-88, Ella Flagg Young to William Rainey Harper, 2 December 1899, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 54, Folder 25, Archives, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Ill.

<sup>35</sup>Storr, p. 298. See also the dedication in School and Society: "To Mrs. Emmons Blaine, to whose interest in educational reform the



appearance of this book is due." On November 1, 1899, Dewey wrote Mrs. Blaine thanking her for her "very great generosity which made possible the publication of the lectures I gave last year." McCaul, item 46.

<sup>36</sup>Tostberg, p. 114.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-19; Campbell, pp. 218-20.

<sup>38</sup>Dewey probably knew firsthand as early as January 1900 that the merger was contemplated. He wrote Mrs. Blaine on 25 January that he would be glad to meet her and the trustees of the Chicago Institute as she had requested. In July 1900 he sent two telegrams and several letters saying he would have difficulty meeting her, could she put her questions in writing. He did, however, finally meet with her. See McCaul, "A Preliminary Listing of Dewey Letters," items 54, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69. Tostberg, p. 128, says that he could find no evidence that Dewey was "greatly enthusiastic" about the merger. This is an understatement in view of the letters he details. Earlier accounts of Dewey and Parker at the University of Chicago have assumed the two were close. See, for example, Curti, p. 379 and Dictionary of American Biography 1936 ed., s.v. "Francis Wayland Parker," by Charles H. Judd.

<sup>39</sup>Campbell, p. 220; Tostberg, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup>On Parker's salary, see Campbell, p. 223; on Dewey's salary see Dykhuizen, p. 353, note #47 citing letter from Dewey to Harper, 13 April 1901, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925.

<sup>41</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," School and Society, in 3 Parts, 89 (25 March, 8 April and 21 April 1961): 152-57, 179-83, 202-206. For Harper's and the parents' positions, see p. 156.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 156, ft note #7. One of the letters was from one of Ella's friends whom she saw at State Board of Education meetings on which they both served. This was John W. Cook, President of the State Normal School at DeKalb. See Tostberg, p. 214.

<sup>43</sup>Nellie Lucy Griffiths, "A History of the Organization of the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago" (M.A. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1927, Microfilms, T786564), pp. 98-99 citing a letter from Laura Runyon to Griffiths, 31 January 1927.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 100 citing an interview of 9 January 1927 with Katharine M. Stilwell.

<sup>45</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," p. 156 citing letters from Dewey to Jackman, 16 September 1901 and Dewey to Harper, 12 September 1901.

<sup>46</sup>Campbell, p. 223.

<sup>47</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," pp. 156-57.

<sup>48</sup>She had been at a salary of \$500 for teaching English part time.

<sup>49</sup>Ella's letter is not in the files, but is referred to by Dewey in his letter of 22 July 1901. See McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," p. 157.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., citing a letter from Dewey to Harper, 8 November 1901.

<sup>51</sup>Griffiths, p. 108.

<sup>52</sup>Tostberg, p. 217.

<sup>53</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," p. 179.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>55</sup>Tostberg, p. 201 citing a letter of 4 August 1902 from Dewey to Blaine.

<sup>56</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," p. 181; Dykhuizen, p. 110 citing letters of 21 February 1903 from Dewey to Jackman and Jackman to Dewey.

<sup>57</sup>Tostberg, p. 224.

<sup>58</sup>Dykhuizen, p. 111 citing a letter of 4 May 1903 from Jackman to Harper.

<sup>59</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," p. 182. See also a set of notes (1 page) in Flora J. Cooke's hand in the Flora J. Cooke Papers, n.d., Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Ill. "In 1902 - Dr. Dewey brought his Practice school to un[iversity].... He made Mrs. Dewey Principal [of the] Elem[tary] school. He had understood he would choose his faculty at [the] end of y[ear?] But when Col Parker took his faculty to U of C he had contracted for their protection in tenure as many of them had international renoun.... Mr. [Dewey] had app[ointed] Mrs. Dewey as Principal when merged but during year - neither she nor Parker teachers happy. She said [she] must resign unless [she] could drop? Chicago staff. And Parker Faculty said they must resign if she continued as prin[cipal] - there was [an] impasse.... And what might have been [a] great ex[periment] under the Col came to an end - In that P[arker] and [the] new director were entirely different in Ed[ucational] principle and practice."

<sup>60</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," p. 182. Apparently, Ella was present at a meeting when Dewey told Emily Rice of his intention to appoint Alice Dewey as principal. Ella's role is not clear, but seems to have been limited. Perhaps she was to serve as

a witness to what transpired in case of later conflicting claims. If she had any more active part in the merger, the records do not show it.

<sup>61</sup>Tostberg, p. 226 citing a letter of 5 May 1903 from Blaine to Harper.

<sup>62</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," p. 203 citing a letter of 27 April 1904 from Harper to Alice Dewey.

<sup>63</sup>Dewey to Cooke, 9, 18, June, 21 November, 3 December 1902, 4 February 1904, Parker Papers, Flora J. Cooke Folder. In the June 18 letter Dewey wrote, "I could not guarantee that we should always agree, but I am quite sure we should at least always agree in disagreeing."

<sup>64</sup>Apparently Ella took care to see that Alice Dewey had no cause to feel slighted on at least one occasion. On 16 September 1903 she wrote to David Felmley, President of Illinois State Normal College, as follows: "Doubtless you would have given Mrs. Dewey the full amount of attention if I had not written you; and yet, I must thank you for the courtesy you showed in response to my letter." Felmley Papers, Special Collections, Milner Library, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois.

<sup>65</sup>Campbell, p. 219-21.

<sup>66</sup>Ella Flagg Young to Harper, 7 November 1903, Presidents' Papers, 1889-1925, Box 71, Folder 2.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Duncan to Cooke, 8 May 1903, Parker Papers, Cooke Folder.

<sup>69</sup>McCaul, "Dewey and the University of Chicago," p. 203 citing a letter of 27 April 1904 from Harper to Alice Dewey recounting incidents related to the interview.

<sup>70</sup>Dewey's claim that he did not know Mrs. Dewey would have to resign surely failed to impress Harper in view of a letter of February 29, 1904 from Harper to Dewey explicitly reminding him that the appointment was not to exceed one year and that the trustees were assuming this agreement. Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Dykuizen, pp. 113-15.

<sup>72</sup>McCaul, p. 204-205 citing a letter of 10 May 1904 from Dewey to Harper.

<sup>73</sup>Storr, p. 334. The deficit was probably due to Dewey's merging his Lab School personnel into the School of Education budget.

<sup>74</sup>Tostberg, p. 229 citing a letter from Harper to Butler, Archives, University of Chicago.

<sup>75</sup>Dewey, "Culture and Industry in Education," Educational Bi-Monthly 1 (October 1906): 1-9.

<sup>76</sup>Young, "Democracy in Education," Journal of Education 84 (6 July 1916): 6.

<sup>77</sup>More than Lore: Reminiscences of Marion Talbot (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1936), p. 132.

<sup>78</sup>McManis, p. 119 says that President Harper asked her to "stay and continue the work of the department of education," but that she "felt that she could not remain with conditions as they were at the time." The "very flattering offer" is mentioned by Annie E. S. Beard, "Ella Flagg Young: Principal of the Chicago Normal School," World Today 9 (December 1905): 13.

## CHAPTER 7.

## BACK TO THE CITY SCHOOLS

Upon leaving the University of Chicago, Ella prepared for another European trip. This time it would be extended, which meant that she would have the opportunity to leisurely study the different school systems. Perhaps Laura went with her for companionship in her sojourn. She went to England, Scotland, Wales, Germany, France, and Italy. Her knowledge of German and French helped her immeasurably. She was particularly interested in the German system of education, because the Western world was looking at the practical advancements they had made in manual training and normal school teacher training. Central Europe had earlier become a popular center for educational philosophical thought due to such people as Emmanuel Kant, Johann Herbart, G. F. W. Hegel — to say nothing of Johann Pestalozzi and Frederick Froebel. She had studied the ideas of all these men either on her own or at the university, so that this firsthand experience must have been very enlightening for her.

She spent over a year abroad. She was never isolated from Chicago, however, since friends who knew her itinerary continuously sent her personal information and newspaper clippings of political and educational events. Upon her return to Chicago, Superintendent Edwin G. Cooley (appointed to replace Benjamin Andrews in 1900) asked Mrs. Young to head the Chicago Normal School as its principal. She accepted with the approval of most of the teaching and administrative corps

who had lamented her severance six years earlier and a banquet sponsored by the principals was held in her honor to welcome her back.<sup>1</sup>

Superintendent Cooley was looking for strong, competent leadership that would bring unity and harmony between the school and the city system which was supposed to benefit from its guidance.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Young was well suited to the task, and Cooley probably recognized this long before he officially asked her to become principal, but it is not known whether he ever approached her at any time prior to her return from Europe.

#### In Need of Leadership

The school had had its difficulties during the preceding six years. When Colonel Parker left the Chicago Normal in 1899 those staff members remaining behind were supposed to come under the direction of Cooley himself. Cooley had been principal of a large suburban high school when the board of education and Superintendent Andrews asked him to head up the Normal. Before he could be released from his duties as LaGrange High principal, Superintendent Andrews resigned, and the board needed to appoint a successor. Cooley became their choice for the superintendency and Arnold Tompkins, President of Illinois State Normal, was appointed to the Chicago Normal principalship effective Fall, 1900.

Tompkins had spent most of his life as an educator and administrator. Born to a farmer in Paris, Illinois (1849), he attended country schools until the age of seventeen. After graduation from the Indiana State

Normal School (1880), he held the following positions: superintendent in Worthington and Franklin, Indiana (1880-85); Department Head and Dean in English at DePauw University (1885-90); and English Department Head at the Indiana State Normal (1890-93). He took B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Indiana (1889, 1891). After graduate study at the University of Chicago and a Ph.D. from Ohio State, he held a chair of Pedagogy at the University of Illinois (1895-99) and the Presidency of the Illinois State Normal (1899-1900).<sup>3</sup>

Tompkins inherited difficulties upon arriving at the Normal. Leftover Parkerites were suspicious of the newly hired teachers who were not quite so sympathetic to a child-centered philosophy and vice versa. Then, too, the board of education was experiencing one of its periodic financial cutbacks. As a consequence, the practice of paying cadet teachers \$200 a year prior to their regular teaching appointments was discontinued to the dismay of many Normal students. So Superintendent Cooley realized that Tompkin's problems were not all his own doing, but he undoubtedly hoped that the new principal could overcome some of the factionalism and put the school back on solid ground in its relations within the Normal itself as well as among the city's teaching staff.

In the former role, he did not contest or transform any of the child-centered approaches that had been customary since Parker. He was an idealist, himself, given to supporting the view of a child in an idealized setting over one in a more mundane environment. In his staff he was able to inspire the "dreamer" who held similar ideas to his.<sup>4</sup> Many on the faculty supported him.

In the second capacity he proved to be less successful. The ideal side of education and the resulting "pedagogic child" were not characteristic of pupils in many Chicago schools. Therefore, the Normal was losing its grasp on contemporary educational problems with the result that newly trained teachers were not well-prepared to face their first teaching experiences in tenement or ghetto neighborhoods. The loss of contact went both ways. City teachers did not get the up-to-date in-service training that they needed from the Normal staff. The result of this situation was that the training school operated in isolation from the demands of the large city system that it was designed to meet. Cooley was reported to have visited the school in 1902 and addressed the staff on the topic of their responsibilities to the city school faculty. When he concluded he said that he felt they were very indignant.<sup>5</sup> It took Cooley's continued efforts to calm the staff. By 1903 the various department heads were actually visiting the elementary schools and helping to plan their courses of study so that the manual arts received better visibility in the curricula. In that same year Superintendent Cooley had started Normal extension classes and institute sessions which were run by the faculty for the city's teachers.<sup>6</sup> It was just a beginning, but the school was getting back into contact with the city system.

Tompkins had intended to resign when certain goals were met, but instead he became ill. His administration turned out to be one of continuing conflicts and controversies. The Normal slipped from the high standards it had exhibited under Parker.<sup>7</sup> He died in his country home near Menlo, Georgia, in August, 1905.<sup>8</sup>



## A Perfect Match

With her demonstrated leadership expertise, knowledge of subject matter, and ability to inspire, Ella would always have been an excellent choice for the Normal school vacancy. Now she brought more. Her last six years of study had given her just the right philosophical base with which to take up such work. A great coordination was needed not just among the Normal students and faculty of Chicago, but among the various (numerous) disciplines that had found their way into the already overburdened course of study. She had been a teacher when the first impulses of "practical arts" were felt in the schools. Now they had gained quite a stature in the curriculum, but the tendency for teaching such subjects was to hire "specialists" at the elementary level and to provide separate specialized technical schools at the secondary level. A continued move in this direction would result in a dual system like the ones then popular in Europe. Under such a system social class distinctions would be reinforced as the young worker was educated in a different setting from his academic counterpart. This would mean a destruction of the common school idea which at its very core stood for a school common to all people. Teacher training that afforded a union of the "worker's hand" with the professional's intellect was needed at the elementary level. So what was called for in the Normal's leadership position was a strong philosophical belief in social harmony and curricular unity coupled with a vision for implementing such a belief. As Ella herself might have said, she was "equal to it."

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### A Pragmatic Approach

The studies and research with which Ella was involved with reinforced and expanded her own outlook. During her university years, she had had courses and contacts with several people involved in the beginning formulations of a new type of humanism. This "new humanism" was early represented at Harvard by C. S. Pierce and William James and in England by F. C. S. Schiller. Under the guidance of such people as James Angell, George Mead, James Tufts and John Dewey certain philosophical bases were emerging at the University of Chicago to such an extent that in 1904 William James declared that Chicago had a "school of thought."<sup>9</sup>

Ontologically speaking, experience — of being or of relationships — was the essence of reality in this new system which became better known as pragmatism. Nothing was static or absolute; everything was in an evolutionary process of change. Life, then, became synonymous with experience which happened in a situation. A situation was made up of environments and organisms acting upon and reacting to each other.

Thinking involved a conscious or an unconscious interaction of past experience, reflected upon with present experience, resulting in new thoughts or ideas. This dynamic process of reconstructing experiences in light of new ones was the core of epistemological principles. It led to new conceptions which in turn led to more reflection and reconstruction.

Nothing in this new philosophical system existed in isolation. Unity was an important underlying principle in all experiences.

Everything consisted of a complexity of forces. An investigation of these complexities utilized the scientific method. Ethically speaking, this new school valued democracy and social cohesiveness as positive forces in the evolution of human nature.<sup>10</sup>

#### Mrs. Young's Views

Mrs. Young's greatest contributions to this theoretical framework lay in her ability to integrate philosophic principles with educational practice. The scholarly articles that she wrote invariably reveal this. As Dewey had said, there was no separating theory and practice in Mrs. Young's mind:

In my opinion, what Mrs. Young got from her study of philosophy was chiefly a specific intellectual point of view and terminology (the two things can't be separated, for terminology with a person like Mrs. Young is a very real thing, not a verbal one) in which to clear up and express the practical outcome of her prior experience. This gave her in turn a greater command of her experience and a greater intellectual assurance. This led her in many respects to overestimate the explicit content of my own teachings. That is, she gave me credit for seeing all of the bearings and implication which she with her experience and outlook got out of what I said. As a student (in the classroom, I mean) I should say her chief mark was the ineradicable tendency to test all philosophic formulations by restatement of them in terms of experience — and this not the conventional "experience" of philosophy, but a very definite experience of what the doctrine would mean if attempted in practice — the difference it would actually make in the way of looking at other things than just philosophy. She had by temperament and training the gist of a concrete empirical pragmatism with reference to philosophical conceptions before the doctrine was ever formulated in print. Another thing that impressed me was the range of her experience — its scope, and her habitual attitude of openness to everything which would enrich it. To say that I have never seen a student of her age who had retained the flexibility and open-mindedness of younger students is to understate the fact very much — her experience had, instead of closing her mind, made it more eager and more competent in

growth. She hadn't retained flexibility and open-mindedness; she had cultivated and acquired them to an extraordinary degree.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, those thoughts that she put on paper during these years symbolize the activities and attitudes that she practiced as Normal principal. It will, therefore be useful to examine some of these ideas in detail before viewing her principalship.

Her dissertation, Isolation in the School, was a lengthy essay involving a description of school conditions as they existed:

Chief among the defects is the separation of the school into schools - kindergarten, elementary, secondary, college, university - each based upon a theory and method which in itself is original and final. These sharp divisions are not the results of differentiation within a recognized unity; on the contrary, they are the legitimate outcome of the manner in which the idea of the school has come to include all the various departments mentioned. The parts have been brought together mechanically, thus making the accepted conception of this great social institution that of an aggregation of independent units, rather than that of an organization whose successful operation depends upon a clearly recognized interrelation, as well as distinction, between its various members and their particular duties.<sup>12</sup>

According to her premise, grade divisions had prevented the coordination of subjects. Isolation was extensive throughout the system: administrator from administrator, teachers from administrators and from each other. This divisiveness had led to such different and varied personal aims that a high degree of instructional uniformity seemed necessary and individuality was sacrificed. "It is just here that the mechanism of the graded system" leads to a teaching corps reduced to the drudgery of functioning as "operatives." Consequently, the teacher "is not free to teach according to his 'conscience and power'." The office of teacher is degraded "to the grinding of

prescribed grists, in prescribed quantities, and with prescribed fineness -- to the turning of the crank of a revolving mechanism....The normal schools have exalted method above culture, and so their graduates have been under the sway of the uniform normal method." Heavy-handed supervision, she goes on to say, has resulted in the existing evils of our schools; i.e., the withdrawal of some of the best classroom teachers to the "prize" places of administration, with the resulting increase in departmental head positions. She continues to explain that this top heavy administration leads to petty jealousies, nervous prostration, overexpenditures and more divisiveness that interferes with the work of the classroom teachers. The petty jealousies among a staff "are always evidence that the ... ranking officer is a person in power rather than of power." An executive "devoid of petty jealousy, and refusing to use it as a spur for his subordinates will find the possibilities of a solidarity among the members ... which does not exist in any other calling," because love of knowledge and faith in the future of humanity "are in varying degrees peculiar to the minds that elect to teach the young."<sup>13</sup>

Ella advocated an administrator-staff relationship in which supervisors announce their conclusions in theory and ideals in practice and then say to teachers "take these thoughts of mine and be original in using them."<sup>14</sup> Her view of isolation in social organizations, therefore, meant deprivation of the exercise of inherent powers, both originative and constructive, i.e., negation, whereas cooperation involves the self-initiated use of potential power resulting in creative intelligence.

The solution for securing freedom of thought, according to Ella, was to develop within the various parts of the school system, organizations for the consideration of legislation — teachers' councils within buildings and a central council of representatives from these — all small enough to make discussions "deliberative not sensational." When topics that are discussed between council and superintendent twice end in impasse, the latter should "act in accordance with his own judgment and be held responsible for the outcome."<sup>15</sup> Such organization should result in a higher type of unification — one that would send out into the world from the school young men and women "trained to clear thinking, active in their belief in a personal responsibility for the realization of the humanitarian idea underlying the form of government in which the American state is embodied."<sup>16</sup>

Philosophically, this was by far Ella's most encompassing piece of work, and it held heartfelt beliefs — ones that she would spend years practicing with devotion. Her thesis was eventually published as a book by the University of Chicago Press. Later, Margaret Haley, of the Chicago Teachers' Federation, would refer to it as "the Bible of the teachers of the United States [on] the question of academic freedom."<sup>17</sup>

Everyone wasn't quite as positive, however. U.S. Commissioner of Education William T. Harris in a paper which he read at the Detroit meeting of the NEA in 1901 said isolation in schools was a good, not bad idea. By isolation, Harris meant distant intellectual objectivity. In a discussion period following his presentation, Ella very politely

and diplomatically pointed out that she had meant something different (i.e., a lack of cooperation) by the term.<sup>18</sup>

Two articles published during Ella's university years deserve explanation, because they embody other ideas which she regarded highly and which she tried to implement as an administrator.<sup>19</sup> The first one, "Ethics in the School," she wrote in December, 1901. Succinctly stated she asserts that "our being's end and aim is the evolution of a character which, through thinking of the right and acting for the right, shall make for right conduct, rectitude, righteousness."<sup>20</sup> She discusses the various approaches to discipline practiced in the schools and warns of their dangers. For example: 1) She describes teachers' dependencies on the use of jealousy and rivalry among students to entice them to study and even asks the question, what have they learned -- content or how to beat each other for gold stars? 2) She discusses the unnaturalness in teachers who conclude that pupil behavior which they would consider functional outside of the classroom, is threatening, disrespectful, showy, or unworthy inside the classroom. 3) She states that teachers are too concerned with obedience and not enough with understanding individual patterns. Consequently, they resort to sarcasm and group punishments for individual deeds. 4) Finally, she calls for less punishment and more individual rewards for all, including the "sadly neglected" slow or backward child. In an atmosphere of sympathy and cooperative activity "the strong will be generous, the weak will dare to be true; the gifted and the lowly will each strive for the good of all."<sup>21</sup>

The second article she wrote in 1903. It discussed the use of "Scientific Method in Education" and can be summed up as follows:

Educational method to be of worth should be scientific method applied to the art of teaching. The method of the teacher is simply an attitude of mind like that of the scientist. There are two elements involved, the learning mind and the subject-matter or environment. To have an intimate acquaintance with each, to appreciate the expectant longing of mind, to interpret its responses to stimuli, to form valid conceptions of the activity and assimilating power of each child in the environment made by the subject, is to have a method in teaching which covers the entire range of that great art. It is to have the method of science applied to education. This means that the teacher should have a method applicable to every subject, in every division of the school beginning with the kindergarten and extending through the graduate school. A distinct method for every subject is not necessary any more than a special scientific method for each branch of science would be necessary. Whatever be the subject one is teaching the aim is identical with that of all other subjects taught: to determine how mind is working with the material in its environment, what nourishment it is selecting and assimilating.<sup>22</sup>

#### Uniting a Faculty

Ella entered upon her duties as principal of the Normal School in the fall of 1905. The task ahead of her was great. First, she had to gain the rapport of a faculty that had grown accustomed to operating under "fatherly" leaders who liked dependent teachers and who subscribed to a somewhat idealized "child centered" philosophy. Both Parker and Tompkins had been of this persuasion, and their combined tenures covered nearly a quarter of a century. Many of the teachers had lost contact with the "real world" in which their students would teach; moreover, they felt lost if not frequently told what to do, even what to say and think, by the principal. When Mrs. Young refused to state concise



premises some members became offended. "All that people desire me to do," she said, "is to give them some stock phrases which they can use on all occasions instead of doing their own thinking."<sup>23</sup> In those first few months she lost her patience trying to establish a free and independent spirit of cooperation rather than a dependency on the leadership of a mentor. It was a very difficult time, but she did not give up. In a faculty meeting she stated her aims:

It is the desire of the principal to consult freely with the members of the faculty concerning matters about which there are any questions, but, on the other hand, when persons are appointed to work out plans in committee or otherwise, they should not expect the principal to formulate a plan so that the report will be from the principal rather than the true representative belief of the committee. A faculty meeting which consists merely in endorsing something propounded by a member of the faculty or by the principal, is no faculty meeting at all. The faculty meeting should be a place for free discussion of all objections. Objections need not be thrown out in a combative way...[or] entered only when doubts are felt; but when any proposition is not thoroughly understood it should be expressed in the meeting. Our attention is often misdirected: we are apt to ask ourselves what is wanted, rather than what should be.<sup>24</sup>

Ella maintained an active involvement with the students and the staff. She developed the habit of holding informal interviews with the students in an endeavor to understand their goals with respect to teaching. One ex-pupil recalled how terrified she was of Mrs. Young. During one such interview the principal asked her if she wanted to teach. The pupil did not know for sure. This was not an answer that set well with Ella.<sup>25</sup> She had very little patience with faculty or students who were not loyally involved in education. She did not mince words when she discovered a lack of this commitment.<sup>26</sup>

Plate 2

Photograph by Jarvis Weed of Ella Flagg Young when she was Principal of the Chicago Normal School (now Chicago State University).

Chicago Historical Society. Used by permission.



As principal Ella made impromptu visits to see prospective normal employees so that she could assess their ability and competency as teachers and teacher trainers. Such was the case when she visited the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts in search of an industrial arts instructor. The class was being conducted in a normal fashion when Mrs. Young arrived. She sat quietly in the back of the room looking down at her folded hands so as not to call attention to herself. The teacher in charge called on a young man to conduct the class. After he was finished Mrs. Young slipped out of the room. A few days later the young man was hired at the Normal to teach industrial arts. Its principal had been favorably impressed.<sup>27</sup>

Efforts to unite the faculty took another form. The school had been operating on a departmentalized organization. She noticed that when different departmental members passed each other in the halls, they hardly ever spoke or even smiled. Attitudes like this would certainly affect more than personal relationships. Therefore she called the various members to her office to discuss this remoteness. The new industrial arts instructor, Elmer Morrow, was at the meeting.

Many years later he recalled "She believed that industrial arts teaching with its pragmatic, mechanical and constructive approaches should be inhibited by the good tastes of the fine arts in order that the student should have revealed to him the several qualities of both. She also felt that the fine arts area of activities should be inhibited toward the pragmatic."<sup>28</sup> An intermingling of subjects across departments with the activities immersed in the students experiences was the signal of the day after the meeting. Her leadership in this area was

anything but democratic; the dictum was to accomplish this association "or else."<sup>29</sup>

The policy worked. "From then on we were really united," said Mr. Morrow. The individual classes were then organized with two instructors in a sort of team teaching approach. Each team worked together to prepare lessons. Both members of the team were called to teach the subjects that were not their specialties. In Mr. Morrow's case he would teach the fine arts part of the lesson, while his partner would handle the industrial arts aspects of the activity.<sup>30</sup>

This type of cooperative activity among the departments became typical. The spirit of the group was changing. She had given them the best plan of organization that she could. She had shared her ideas and theories on the best approaches to teaching. Now, the staff members were free to develop the lessons along whatever lines they felt would be effective. Mrs. Young taught lessons too — a practical course in ethics to freshmen, and a course on the school which dealt with its practical and social bearing. She was practicing her own definition of an effective leader. Consider, for example, her statement in a 1908 editorial:

An effective principal must have a well organized theory and practice of education that will give to the teaching corps of the school assurance both of stability that will guarantee the continuance of what has been already attained and of flexibility that will insure further progress. A good principal must know how to teach and should teach in order to keep in touch with the work of the teaching corps and to establish the intellectual and moral confidence of the older boys and girls in the conduct of the school. There is no better proof of the worth of a principal than that confidence.<sup>31</sup>

Ella encouraged her faculty to give the same flexibility and freedom of judgment to their students — especially in practice teaching. This way, she said the students would not feel as if they were constantly being asked to improve.<sup>32</sup>

#### Unifying a Course of Study

As previously stated, some of the subjects were coordinated and presented together in what would be called a team teaching approach today. After an elementary foundation of knowledge had been given the students, their special individual strengths were given the opportunity to develop. In this training course two conditions were stressed:

1) the need to equip prospective teachers to teach every subject in the elementary school course that required regular and not special teachers, 2) the necessity of providing opportunities for certain subjects to be artistically and scientifically explored according to individual preferences.<sup>33</sup>

At the end of the two year training course a student had completed the following schedule:

---

Course of Study, 1907 <sup>34</sup>	
Content areas	Hours spent
<hr/>	
<u>Required</u> --	
Child Study & Psychology	100 hours
Education and Ethics	120 hours
Practice Teaching	200 hours
Special Method in two departments	40 hours
English and Oral Expression	120 hours
Geography	100 hours
Mathematics	100 hours
Science	100 hours
History	100 hours
The Arts	100 hours
Singing	100 hours
Physiology and Physical Education	60 hours
Gymnasium	80 hours
 <u>Elective</u> --	
Advanced work in one or two departments	200 hours
A short special work in one department	20 hours

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With regard to English usage, Ella bemoaned the fact that "children with slovenly enunciation, incorrect and meager English pass from the elementary into the high school and with but slight improvement graduate into the normal school and finally ... with the careless, defective speech ... into the teaching corps."<sup>35</sup> This continued to be a problem. In her last report in 1909 she requested that an assessment of oral or written expression be required for Normal entrance.<sup>36</sup>

Science for the elementary level was taught as nature study. Ella considered it especially important when she found that out of a group of fifty to sixty elementary teachers only one felt competent to teach it.<sup>37</sup>

Ella stressed utilization of the child's curiosity about life as a fundamental guiding principle. If the scientific method were to be employed the young pupil must "experience the charm of life...of the flower, vine, bush helped to grow by the tender care bestowed upon it...by the loving little worker."<sup>38</sup> (One cannot help wondering if this approach would have enhanced her own childhood feelings about gardening.)

The arts course combined the graphic, manual and industrial arts into one area. Often projects were made, but these were to have aesthetic beauty as well as utility. An example illustrates the degree to which she was convinced of this. Some window boxes had been made by students in a manual training class and were being used in the Normal building. She asked why they were being displayed. When told that they represented student effort she said, "Take them down; things here should have beauty as well as use."<sup>39</sup>

#### Uniting the School with the City

One of Ella's strong efforts was to gain a better rapport between the Normal and the city school system. First, she selected as practice schools those that typified the city. For example, she dropped a school of American born students and chose one where most children were foreign born. Second, she arranged for the practice teachers to do their teaching in the first part of the morning. The regular teacher would have them the rest of the day which was more amenable to the wishes of parents. Third, the practice teacher's success was judged by a Normal School supervisor, a critic teacher and a practice principal.



Prior to this a head critic teacher had evaluated the work alone.

Representative Normal department members became supervisors of the work in the practice schools. They, then, replaced the head critics.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, besides continuing the normal extension work, she began editing a bimonthly journal that was sent free of charge to every Chicago teacher.

The first issue of the Educational Bi-Monthly appeared October, 1906 and clearly stated its function:

The appearance of a new educational magazine may signify the desire of a group of teachers to herald a new theory of education, or to emphasize a single line of experimentation. The Chicago Normal School has no desire to offer a new theory as the output of its energy in the last decade. It believes, however, that since the days of the advent of the "new education" there has been such a shifting of points of view as to values, that there is full warrant for presentation of changed demands, for discussions of reactionary tendencies against small things that have been unduly magnified, and for efforts to clarify conceptions that underlie present-day ideals of education.

To do this, it will be necessary to enlist in the work undertaken, not only the theorist but the practical teacher also; not only those engaged in educational work, but those who see some things better because of their greater distance from the center of the field of action. It would be of service to know what Industry has to offer in reply to the argument in the opening article of this number; to know if the school appreciates the vitality of the link that binds its work and that of the world beyond its pale.

In no community has there been more scattered experimentation in education than in Chicago in its public schools. To discover the unity in much that seems unrelated, we need more acumen than is possessed by the faculty of one school, or the combined faculties of schools engaged in the same branch of the service; as the elementary schools, or the high schools, or the colleges. In recent time, teachers from the different groups of schools have met and talked over the educational situation. Such conferences are a necessity as preliminaries to such discussions as those which this magazine aims to further, and to make effective in the unification of the various forces in the schools of this city.

It is not new methods that the Chicago Normal School seeks to make conspicuous; but, the elements that cohere and harmonize in that which has been wrought out in the struggle of a great cosmopolitan city school life trying to find its life, trying to gain control of itself.<sup>41</sup>

#### Last Years at the Normal

Ella remained as principal until the summer of 1909 when she was elected to the superintendency. The four years that she gave to this job helped to establish the Normal as an efficient, well-administered institution that was turning out competently trained teachers.<sup>42</sup> If anything it had become too popular. In her last report Mrs. Young cautioned that if the present enrollment trend continued they would be graduating more prospective teachers than the city schools needed. From 1904 to 1909 the number of yearly graduates had gone from seventy-four to 261.<sup>43</sup>

There was still work to be done. She hoped to see the Normal become a degree-granting institution at least at the junior college level. The State Normal had made arrangements with the University of Illinois so that their students could receive course credit for their freshman and sophomore years.<sup>44</sup> She had compared both the state and city normal courses and felt that the level of work done there was equivalent to their undergraduate work.<sup>45</sup> Her recommendation that an evaluation of oral expression be included in the entrance examination to the Normal was implemented in 1910.<sup>46</sup>

The school also needed a gymnasium and buildings for manual and fine arts. She ingeniously helped with this. She invited the school

council committee (made up of aldermen) to the Normal to discuss the need for facilities (cost: \$200,000). Enroute to the Normal one of the aldermen said, "What in blazes [do] they want that for?" Skeptically they arrived and much to their pleasant surprise they were given lunch, cooked and served by the female students. Upon leaving the men were heard commenting about the "terrific lunch" worth from "fifty to seventy-five cents" and served by such "pretty girls, too." One newspaper reported that the \$200,000 was assured.<sup>47</sup> The building was started before Mrs. Young left the office.<sup>48</sup>

In her last year the departmental members took a more responsible leadership role for their various disciplines. They held round-table discussions where everyone participated in the curricular plans. These were reported in the last Educational Bi-Monthly that she edited.<sup>49</sup>

Even the previously mentioned student who feared her had to admit that the school "ran like clockwork when she was at the helm."<sup>50</sup> Mr. Morrow, the Industrial Arts staff member, said that she had a "brusque manner about her." And that "she dominated the whole situation." She would "delegate responsibility" and when "fighting for a principle [she] could be as 'hard as nails', ... could match wits with anyone .... Instruction was second nature to her because of her actual experience in teaching, and the students whom she taught thought the world of her."<sup>51</sup>

Cooley had chosen well and had heartily approved of her administration.<sup>52</sup> In fact, it was probably the brightest spot in his nine-year career as superintendent. The rest was plagued with struggle and

conflict from which he had grown weary. He resigned in March, 1909 and moved to Boston where he accepted the presidency of the D. C. Heath Company.<sup>53</sup> Relations among the various school factions had been anything but harmonious over the last ten years.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Memorial Committee, A History of the Ella Flagg Young Club (Chicago: Ella Flagg Young Club, 1956), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>John T. McManis, Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1916), pp. 123-24.

<sup>3</sup>Who Was Who in America, 1897-1942, 1, s.v. "Tompkins, Arnold," p. 1245. See also Mary Agnes Riley, "A History of the Chicago Normal School: 1856-1906" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1914), pp. 157-60.

<sup>4</sup>Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Fifty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1906 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1906), pp. 101-104; Joseph Reim, "The Contributions to Education of Ella Flagg Young" (M.E. thesis, Chicago Teachers College, 1940), pp. 9-11; Riley, pp. 125-27.

<sup>5</sup>McManis, p. 124.

<sup>6</sup>Forty-Ninth Annual Report, p. 109. The Normal extension classes allowed teachers to build credit for salary advancements.

<sup>7</sup>Reim, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup>Riley, p. 157.

<sup>9</sup>William James, "The Chicago School," The Psychological Bulletin 1 (15 January 1904): 1-5.

<sup>10</sup>James H. Tufts, "On the Genesis of the Aesthetic Categories," Chicago Bicennial Publications, ser. 1, 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903): 3-14; A. W. Moore, "Existence, Meaning and Reality in Locke's Essay and in Present Epistemology," *ibid.*, pp. 27-52; James Rowland Angell, "The Relations of Structural and Functional Psychology to Philosophy," *ibid.*, pp. 53-74; George H. Mead, "The Definition of the Psychical," *ibid.*, pp. 75-112; John Dewey, "The Logical Conditions of a Scientific Treatment of Morality," *ibid.*, pp. 113-40; Ella Flagg Young, "Scientific Method in Education," *ibid.*, pp. 141-55.

<sup>11</sup>McManis, p. 120 citing a letter from Dewey to McManis, n.d. [c. 1915].

<sup>12</sup>Ella Flagg Young, "Isolation in the School," Contributions to Education 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1901): 13. This was the published version of her dissertation; the title of the original typescript was "Isolation in School Systems."

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-26.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>17</sup>Margaret A. Haley Papers. Unpublished autobiography, Version IV, 1934-35, p. 199. In Chicago Teachers' Federation File, Boxes 32-34. Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>18</sup>William T. Harris, "Isolation in the School - How It Hinders and How It Helps," Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-Ninth Annual Meeting Held at Detroit, Michigan, July 8-12, 1901 (Chicago: The Association, 1901), pp. 357-63. Ella Flagg Young, "A Reply," ibid., pp. 363-64.

<sup>19</sup>Young, Ethics in the School, Contributions to Education, 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902): 9-44; Young, "Scientific Method in Education," pp. 141-55.

<sup>20</sup>Young, "Ethics in the School," p. 9.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>22</sup>Young, "Scientific Method in Education," p. 147. For a later related work see also Young, "Hypothesis in Education," Educational Bi-Monthly 6 (October 1911): 1-6. For a critique of the contemporary educational theories see Young, Some Types of Modern Educational Theory, Contributions to Education, 6 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1902): 7-70.

<sup>23</sup>McManis, p. 126. John McManis was a member of the Normal faculty during her principalship. Their friendship started when he was a student of hers at the University of Chicago. It lasted until her death in 1918. His account of her normal administration is contained in pp. 123-43.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., citing minutes of a faculty meeting, 1905. Chicago Normal School, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>25</sup>Rosemary Donatelli, "The Contributions of Ella Flagg Young to the Educational Enterprise" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago Microfilms T22517, 1971), p. 118 citing a telephone conversation with Rita Jackson Gregalunas, 24 June 1967, who later became a principal in one of the Chicago schools. For an account of this normal principalship see Donatelli, pp. 201-78.

<sup>26</sup>McManis, pp. 142-43.

<sup>27</sup>Donatelli, pp. 219-20 citing Elmer Morrow to Rosemary Donatelli, 25 July 1966.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>31</sup>Young, "Editorial," Educational Bi-Monthly 2 (June 1908): 512.

<sup>32</sup>McManis, p. 127.

<sup>33</sup>Fifty-Third Annual Report, p. 124. In another article she commends the efforts at unifying science and culture at the college level. See Young, "Recognition of Scientific Studies," Journal of Education 66 (26 September 1907): 315.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>36</sup>Fifty-Fifth Annual Report, p. 108. The large foreign-born population probably contributed to this situation.

<sup>37</sup>Fifty-Third Annual Report, p. 126.

<sup>38</sup>Young, "Editorial," Educational Bi-Monthly 2 (April 1907): 382. For another discussion of science teaching see Young, "The Proper Articulation of Technical Education within the System of Public Education," Journal of Education 66 (25 July 1907): 125.

<sup>39</sup>McManis, pp. 131-32.

<sup>40</sup>Reim, p. 10; McManis, pp. 135-137.

<sup>41</sup>Young, "Editorial," Educational Bi-Monthly 1 (October 1906): 74-75.

<sup>42</sup>Reim, p. 11; Donatelli, p. 244.

<sup>43</sup>Fifty-Fifth Annual Report, p. 106.

<sup>44</sup>Young to David Felmley, 10 November 1905, Felmley Papers, Special Collections, Milner Archives, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 15 November 1905; Fifty-Third Annual Report, p. 129; Young, "Normal School Degrees," Journal of Education 66 (17 October 1907): 396.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>47</sup>"Feast Wins Alderman," Chicago Record Herald, 16 March 1909, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup>Fifty-Fifth Annual Report, p. 110.

<sup>49</sup>The Staff, "Report of the Faculty Round Tables in the Chicago Normal School, 1908-9," Educational Bi-Monthly 3 (June 1909): 419-24.

<sup>50</sup>Donatelli, p. 240 citing telephone conversation with Rita Jackson Gregalunas, 24 June 1967.

<sup>51</sup>Reim, p. 11 citing interview with Elmer Morrow, 6 January 1940.

<sup>52</sup>Fifty-Third Annual Report, p. 124.

<sup>53</sup>"E. G. Cooley Resigns His 'Too Strenuous' School Chief's Job," Chicago Record Herald, 13 February 1909, p. 1.



## CHAPTER 8

## A DECADE OF SCHOOL TURBULENCE (1899-1909)

During Ella's years as a professor and as principal of the Normal, Chicago continued to grow and tensions of many kinds characterized the city, the schools, and politics. The biggest single change in schools, and one which introduced a whole new element, was the growth of teacher organizations. During the first decade of the twentieth century, teachers in Chicago gained for the first time a measure of power and a sense of purpose which transcended their daily classroom routines. It was a significant change and not a welcome one to many board members. In final analysis, it compounded Superintendent Cooley's problems and set the stage for the selection of a new chief school executive -- one who could deal effectively with the teachers.

Cooley had inherited a disgruntled faculty when he took office in 1900. It will be recalled that the two-year administration of E. Benjamin Andrews was hardly tranquil, and his autocratic policies were instrumental in Ella's decision to sever her connections with the city's schools. In her last two years as assistant superintendent she had given teachers in her district a voice in the decision making process when it concerned them.<sup>1</sup> They had officially talked with her on a regular basis in council meetings. She took their opinions into account when making reports and recommendations to the superintendent. Other districts had followed her lead. It was the first practical application of the teachers' councils idea embodied in her thesis.

Also, the elementary teachers (mostly women) had organized themselves on a city-wide basis to take action against their common grievances -- low salaries, no tenure protection and especially no pension system. They became united enough to bring about the adoption of a pension plan which was to be supported by small contributions. This plan was criticized on actuarial grounds and in 1898 at a meeting to answer these criticisms the group became even stronger. After this they were officially known as the Chicago Teachers' Federation (CTF), with elected officers and district representatives. Catharine Goggin, the District Eight teacher who on behalf of the teachers had expressed such dismay at Ella's resignation, had worked hard to bring the organization into being.<sup>2</sup>

Teachers were taking an increasingly active role in protecting their professional welfare, but most Chicago politicians and school administrators discounted their importance at first. In the next ten years, however, they would turn into one of the major forces with which the board of education had to contend. As Mayor Carter H. Harrison, III was to say in 1913, "I told the board they should have stopped those teachers when they first organized. Now, it's too late."<sup>3</sup>

The CTF became a crucial factor in Ella's career, for during the 1909 superintendency search it was her relationship with its membership that swayed the board in her favor. Therefore, it is necessary to describe some of the main events in the growth of this organization and to delineate Mrs. Young's relationship to it.

## Early Years of the CTF

At the CTF's formation in 1898 a number of teachers envisioned an organization that would allow them to democratically express their views and work for majority decisions and the betterment of teaching conditions. Among those who felt this way were Catharine Goggin and Margaret Haley, two teachers who were destined to have major roles in the CTF's history. Both had had several years successful teaching experience in Chicago; neither could have foreseen the unusual careers which were ahead of them.

Catharine Goggin graduated from the Normal department in the early 1870's at the time when Ella was working with the practice school. She became a primary teacher at the Jones school which was later under Ella's supervision when she was assistant superintendent of district eight. Here Catharine became favorably impressed with the assistant superintendent's beliefs about democracy and the need for teachers to have a voice in their professional lives. These views fit well with her own. She was very interested in obtaining fair and just treatment for teachers in all aspects. Her uncle was a well regarded judge, and at one time a member of the board of education. It was while he was on the board, during the mid-nineties, that a group of teachers (including Catharine) formulated a pension system which the board approved. A legal interest encouraged by her uncle and a strong commitment to democracy inspired by Mrs. Young produced qualities that the CTF benefited from until her unfortunate and untimely death in January, 1916.<sup>4</sup>

Margaret "Maggie" Haley was originally from Joliet, Illinois, where she had dropped out of high school at sixteen in order to help support the family. Her father had lost his business by refusing to become involved in some shady corporate dealings, so Maggie took a summer normal course, certified herself, and became a teacher.<sup>5</sup> Realizing the need for professional training, she continued to take normal courses on Saturdays and went for one term to the Cook County Normal where she says that she "was greatly influenced by the philosophy of its principal Colonel Francis W. Parker."<sup>6</sup> At this time Miss Haley had become a grammar grade (6th grade) teacher at the Hendricks School in Chicago. The next ten years of teaching there compelled her to join the group of teachers who were combining on a city-wide basis. She had approved of her father's courageous stand which until this time had produced in her a sort of latent interest in reform. Her belief in honesty and democratic procedures, coupled with a large capacity for perseverance in the face of great odds, made her a winning teammate to Miss Goggin and an incredibly effective leader before and after Catharine's death.<sup>7</sup>

In 1898, however, they were just two members of an organization getting started. The Federation had a general purpose -- of pension plans and better salaries -- and no well-defined course to pursue. Its first president and her supporters tried to control the organization in an autocratic fashion. Among other things this element was interested in glorifying themselves through the foundation of a National Federation of Teachers. There was some national interest in such an

organization and plans had been made for its formation to occur concurrently with the NEA meeting in July 1899.

The CTF's election of officers was scheduled for spring 1899. Many members favored Catharine Goggin for president. The group in power, however, tried to discredit her by making her religious beliefs (she was Catholic) an issue. Meanwhile, some other members had decided to take advantage of the split. They formed themselves into a "peace party" and persuaded a very reluctant Isabel (Bell) Richman to be their presidential candidate. They, then, announced that Mrs. Young thought Bell Richman would be good for the presidency, hoping her endorsement would influence the vote.

Margaret Haley found it difficult to believe that Mrs. Young would get partisanly involved. She concluded that there must be some misunderstanding and telephoned her the same evening that the announcement was made. Mrs. Young invited her over. They discussed it. Then Catharine and Bell's crusader, Blanche Lovering, were invited over, too. Mrs. Young explained what had happened. She said that Miss Lovering had approached her and said, "Do you think Bell Richman is competent?" Mrs. Young replied, "Bell Richman can do anything that she makes up her mind to do."<sup>8</sup> Miss Lovering had to admit that this was what had happened and that Bell felt unqualified for the position, agreeing to run only with Mrs. Young's endorsement. Ella then asked, "What is going on in the federation?" She had heard that Miss Goggin's religion was an issue and thought that this was most unfortunate. Catharine explained that the present officers were trying to impose their will on the rest of the members instead of being a means through

which the group could express itself." Margaret recalled "how Mrs. Young walked up and down her floor and said 'I understand. There are two hostile principles struggling for supremacy and one or the other must prevail. There is no such thing as a third party under such conditions.'"<sup>9</sup>

Ella made arrangements to meet Bell the next morning in order to explain this situation to her. Margaret, however, gave Miss Lovering an earful, telling her among other things that had she (Blanche) lived during the revolution she would have been a Tory -- which was not the best recommendation to have since she taught American history. Ella listened to the one-sided volley, smiling at Margaret's forthrightness, but all the time knowing she was right. Finally, Ella called her off when she had "overwhelmed" Miss Lovering.

Some days later Bell Richman declined the nomination. The presidential election went to Catharine Goggin with Margaret elected as vice-president.<sup>10</sup>

This was not the first time Ella had intervened to straighten out the elementary teachers. A month earlier (February, 1899) the CTF had planned to meet to adopt some resolutions opposing the Rogers Bill -- an outgrowth of William Rainey Harper's "commission report." The part they especially opposed was a clause which stated that in the event of a tax levy shortage in the educational fund, the male teaching force would get regular salaries while the females would be cut. Now, in 1898 the CTF had sent a petition to the board of education requesting a higher salary schedule and it had been granted. They were not of a mind to lose this if they could help it.

The notice that went out for a special meeting was signed by a woman who had a dual role: she was a CTF member, who was chairman of their committee for organizing the Chicago teachers branch of the National Federation of Teachers (which included high school teachers, too). Most of the CTF and a few high school teachers showed up. No one knew what to expect. The Rogers Bill Committee assumed their resolutions were responsible for this special meeting and passed out proposed amendments which did not even include one for the salary clause.

Chaos ensued. No one knew what was happening. A male voice broke through the bedlam and moved to make it a "general federation" meeting since some high school teachers had come. Someone nominated him for chairman, and it was seconded. Then it occurred: this predominantly female audience elected a male chairman. Newspapers joked about it days later. Margaret found herself explaining it to people for weeks. Nor could people understand why the CTF had adopted such watered-down resolutions. It was Ella whose criticism she took to heart. Later she quoted Ella as having said, "Why did you women, when you selected your chairman, why did you select a man? Why did you advertise to the world that you women were not competent to fill those positions [and] that you must call upon men?"<sup>11</sup> It was a lesson Margaret never forgot!

Shortly after these incidents Ella was gone from the school system, but for the next ten years she would occasionally find herself serving in an advisory capacity.<sup>12</sup> In the meantime, the organization had weathered internal disorder and embarrassment, but they had learned some important lessons. For a group without the franchise they were

to become a major force for social and educational reform in the muckraking style.

### The Tax Fight

The CTF's first major battle was launched over the holiday break of 1899-1900 while Ella was winding up her first quarter of teaching at the university. Their 1898 salary petition, originally approved, had been rescinded. The board said that they could not comply with the projected 1900 increases and had not been able to afford all of the 1899 advances. During this Christmas break Margaret Haley overheard a conversation concerning the fact that certain large corporations in Chicago had escaped paying property taxes on land valued at over \$100 million.<sup>13</sup> The State Board of Equalization, whose function was to authorize such tax payments, had never done so for these companies.<sup>14</sup>

This information started her on a forty-year road of reform. She realized as she thought about this information that if the delinquent corporations could be legally forced to pay their share of taxes — some hadn't paid any for 25 years — the city treasury would have adequate funds to pay the increases which the board had allocated. With the help of Miss Goggin, she set about obtaining legal counsel. Ex-governor (and ex-judge) John P. Altgeld told her that she was definitely right in what she wanted to do, but that she would not win against those corporations. He had tried as governor, he told her, but to no avail. She did not understand this for, as she said, "I did not see why we should not win if we were right."<sup>15</sup>



Next, on the advice of some teachers, Margaret saw the board of education President Harris to try to enlist his support in the mandamus suit. He happened to be the son-in-law of the president of one of the worst public utility tax evaders.<sup>16</sup> Miss Haley proceeded to explain to Harris that on Tuesday morning, January 2, 1900, Miss Goggin was going to "institute mandamus proceedings against the State Board of Equalization." According to her own account, as she finished speaking Harris "fell up against the jamb of the door and gasped."<sup>17</sup> After recovering his composure, he questioned them at some length as to their sources and whether or not they had legal advice, and then asked them if they would meet with him on Tuesday, January 2, after he had met with the corporations' counsel. This was almost certainly an attempt on his part to find a way to avoid the writ. He agreed to provide substitutes for the Misses Haley and Goggin and asked them not to take any further action until after their meeting on Tuesday. They agreed.

Harris was several hours late in arriving on Tuesday. When he did finally appear, he said, "I have seen the corporation counsel and I am tired of expedients and temporizing; you people are right; go ahead in the name of the children of Chicago and I am with you."<sup>18</sup> It was Margaret Haley's turn "to gasp and fall up against the jamb of the door."<sup>19</sup> She did, however, manage to ask him if he would write a letter to the teachers of Chicago telling them that he approved of what they were doing. He agreed to the letter.

Finally, she set about enlightening herself about correct tax assessment procedures. A well-known and expensive corporation lawyer

named John S. Miller told her which of the many large companies to sue. These were mainly the public utilities and traction companies who could not move to avoid the assessment. He said companies like Pullman could move to another city which would not please the public sentiment. She took this free advice, but as it turned out a year later, it was to look as if the teachers had discriminated against certain corporations by this exclusion. (When the mandamus suit was on hearing in Springfield, Miss Haley was called as a witness against the State Board of Equalization. After being on the stand for two days, who should cross-examine her as one of the attorneys for the State Board but John S. Miller. When he asked her "for the tenth time" why she chose these particular corporations,

in mortal terror that I was getting something into the record that would hurt our case and . . . . in desperation I answered, 'I selected those corporations because Mr. Miller told me to.' The look that came into Mr. Miller's face as it changed from red to gray and back to red again, while he dropped into a chair like one who had been struck, indicated only too plainly how entirely he had forgotten the friendly advice.<sup>20</sup>

As its legal counsel, the CTF chose Isiah T. Greenacre, a young moderately priced, and very clever tax lawyer whom board president Harris had mentioned. By the next CTF meeting Maggie was able to explain these developments and enlist teacher support. Since the board of education had not approved a leave with pay for Misses Goggin and Haley, the CTF voted to pay their salaries for the following year as they worked on this tax reform. This launched a sixteen-year career as financial secretary for Catharine Goggin and a thirty-nine year career as business representative for Margaret Haley, during which she

was one of the most effective and well-known reformers in Chicago politics. Her forcefulness as a reformer developed out of tireless attention to detail and unflagging devotion to honesty, both of which were required in large quantities.

Once Miss Haley had calculated how much certain corporations should be assessed so that she would have a check on the tax schedules they would later submit, the next step was to follow these schedules from the Assessor's Office to the Review Board's office where the estimates would be revised, if necessary, and returned to the Assessor's Office by September 1. Then, they were to be sent to the State Board of Equalization to be checked for accuracy. The problem in previous years had been that the Review Board had not met its deadlines so that inappropriate schedules had been filled and sent to the State Board at the last minute. (The State Board had also not bothered to check on their accuracy.)<sup>21</sup> Miss Haley checked everyday until October 10 when a mandamus suit was instigated forcing the Review Board to release the schedules. There were still delay tactics and the schedules were not released until Margaret Haley threatened to expose their tactics to every group that was meeting during that election year (the four Review Board members were up for reelection). The picture was similar with the State Board of Equalization — a mandamus suit and then stalling tactics including illegal injunctions and indirect bribes.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile a pension battle was also raging in Springfield over the compulsory contribution clause of the CTF pension plan. A bill was introduced removing the compulsory aspect of the plan. This would mean the end of the pension fund if it passed. The "boss" of the state house

of representatives told Margaret Haley that the bill came from the corporate structure and added: "When you teachers stayed in your schools, we men took care of you, but when you go out of your schools as you have done and attack these great powerful corporations you must expect that they will hit back."<sup>23</sup> During the House and Senate meetings both Misses Goggin and Haley were deliberately misled as to what bills would be presented when and were generally given a merry chase.

When the bill passed, Margaret Haley asked the Governor to veto it. He said he would if the majority of the teachers would sign a petition to that effect. With only ten days left in the school year, this was a difficult task, but Miss Haley contacted every building representative and they in turn passed them out and returned them to her so that she presented them to Governor Yates. However, he had telegrams from several principals and one assistant superintendent saying that their teachers favored the corporation sponsored bill. The Governor, who according to Miss Haley was not inclined toward veto anyway, got irritated, said teachers didn't know their own minds, and signed the bill.<sup>24</sup> Some newspaper stories had concerned the teachers. They left the impression that both Misses Goggin and Haley were too busy working on the tax case, which would go nowhere, and that they neglected the pension bill.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, one year later in the fall of 1901, the correctly filled out schedules were returned to the Cook County Treasurer's Office for collection where the corporation lawyers immediately secured an injunction against the Treasurer until the court could determine if the

amount was correct. The court decision that was rendered in June, 1902, cut the amount from \$2,300,000 to around \$600,000. The CTF's attorney, Isiah T. Greenacre, blocked an appeal by the corporate lawyers on the ground that the money represented salaries for the year 1900. The money was ultimately paid to the board of education only to have the final insult occur. At its meeting in July the board decided to use the money to pay bills and for building maintenance!

Greenacre secured an injunction against the County Treasurer and a hearing was set with the CTF lawyers - of whom Clarence Darrow was one - and the board of education lawyers.<sup>26</sup> More delays occurred until August 1904, when the court ruled in favor of the teachers, and the Board of Education took the case to an appellate court. Miss Haley, realizing that this could go on indefinitely, decided to enlist the CTF in actually supporting mayoral candidates since the mayor appointed the board of education. Their efforts were rewarded when Edward Dunne became mayor in April, 1905. By June of 1906, he was able to appoint fourteen out of twenty-one board members and after six and one half years of steady fighting the delinquent tax money went to the teachers and the battle was won. Corporations also continued to be assessed on a more legal basis. In January, 1915, the educational fund would be found to be depleted. When teachers were notified by Superintendent Young that they would have to work two weeks without pay, Margaret Haley secured from the state legislature a larger tax levy so that all teachers' salaries could be paid.<sup>27</sup>

### The Pension Battle

By 1906 the CTF under Misses Goggin's and Haley's direction had become a formidable power with a national reputation for educational reform. During these six years, however, they were fighting on more than one front. Besides the tax fight, there was the loss suffered by the omission of the compulsory clause in their pension plan, plus the school board's dominance on the board of trustees of the pension fund.

Both of these problems needed to be remedied. They were in 1907, but not without conflict. Margaret and Catharine worked long hours preparing a good pension bill and lobbying for its passage. The bill that became law in July 1907 contained a compulsory contribution clause and a trustee composition of: 1) two school board members appointed by the board; 2) six teachers elected by teachers; and 3) the secretary of the board of education to act as an ex officio member.<sup>28</sup> This new board of trustees was to take office after an election of the teaching representatives which was specified for October.

In the meantime school board President Otto Schneider appointed himself, the well-known Jane Addams (then a member of the board of education) and six teachers none of whom were members of the CTF to a temporary board which would operate until the October election. Schneider boldly stated that he was not having the CTF — or any union (they had affiliated with the Chicago Federation of Labor in 1902), represented on this board, even if they had authored the plan.<sup>29</sup> He also announced that the teachers' election would be an open ballot.

It was his plan to have a small group of teachers nominate Superintendent Cooley as one of the pension board candidates. Each ballot would contain the teacher's registration number and in essence, a vote for someone else would be considered a vote against the superintendent.

The teachers sent a petition, with considerably more than a majority of the teaching corps as signers, to this temporary board whose acting chairman was Jane Addams. The petition asked for an Australian ballot. The board members were to consider the petition at their next meeting which Catharine Goggin attended. However, upon discovering that some of the teachers were going to be at the session Miss Addams, at the insistence of President Schneider, called for an executive (closed) session.

After the meeting it was announced that the ballot would be open (i.e., not secret). Now, this was especially disillusioning to the teachers because they had thought of Jane Addams as their friend. In fact she had spoken in favor of affiliating with the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) at the CTF meeting that voted to do just that.<sup>30</sup> Later when Margaret Haley asked her why she took such a contradictory position she defensively told Margaret that, "you don't understand how I have to work. I want forty playgrounds...." Margaret interrupted her by stating that even 400 school playgrounds would be too high a price to pay with the teachers retirement welfare. Miss Addams "looked woe begone" and suffered greatly for this stand.<sup>31</sup> The teachers were gradually losing their faith in her.<sup>32</sup>

With regard to the ballot, the CTF went into action. At the September nominating meeting each pension district nominated the same

six delegates and quickly moved that nominations close. Cooley's name was not among the six, but two CTF members were. It, therefore did not matter that the ballot was an open one.<sup>33</sup>

#### The Secret Marking System

The teachers had good reason to distrust not only the board of education, but also the superintendent. He had devised a "merit" system for salary advancement whereby teachers would automatically advance the first seven years as long as their efficiency marks were above seventy percent. These efficiency ratings were a secretive affair. Either a principal, district superintendent, or other supervisory staff member would at some time fill out a report on how "efficient" the teacher was in class. These reports were never shown to the teachers and teachers did not know what their reports contained or when they were done.<sup>34</sup>

If this was not enough, Cooley also made advancement to the eighth level (and above) quite difficult. His plan was as follows: 1) teachers wishing to advance to level eight would have to be reexamined over the same subjects that they were originally tested on for certification; 2) in order to be eligible for this second examination, a teacher would need an efficiency score of eighty percent; 3) the test score, plus the efficiency marks would have to average at least eighty percent. Once a teacher passed this obstacle course advances were automatic to the maximum level, level ten.



At their July 1902 meeting the board approved the merit plan with its secret marking system, which went into operation that fall. (This was the same meeting at which the board decided to use the new tax money won by the CTF for building maintenance and repairs.)<sup>35</sup> These actions by the board were instrumental in the CTF's decision to affiliate with the Chicago Federation of Labor.

In the fall when the CTF held their first meeting, a letter of sympathy from the CF of L was read. It invited a delegation to come and explain their plight to 200,000 voting men since the essentially female CTF did not have the franchise. It was also at this meeting that Miss Addams explained that she was a member of many labor unions. (Later that month, after the CTF affiliation with the CF of L, Jane Addams found herself at a White House luncheon trying unsuccessfully to explain to President Roosevelt why she had encouraged such an outrageous act.<sup>36</sup>

For most teachers, level seven became the maximum, and this had been the maximum for twenty years. In 1905 out of 2600 teachers who were potentially eligible for level ten, only sixty-one were receiving the tenth year maximum salary.<sup>37</sup>

The salary schedule was as follows:<sup>38</sup>

	Primary	Grammar
First year	\$ 500	\$ 500
Second year	550	550
Third year	575	625
Fourth year	650	675
Fifth year	700	725
Sixth year	775	800
Seventh year	800	825
Eighth year	875	900
Ninth year	925	950
Tenth year	975	1000 (maximum)
Eleventh year	1000 (maximum)	

Ella was at the University of Chicago when Cooley's "merit" plan was instituted but she expressed herself through an article in the Elementary School Teacher. The CTF ran it in their Bulletin on December 18, 1903. Every teacher received a copy of this bulletin and on the front page they read:

#### RE-EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS

Scholarship can never result from cramming for an examination. . . . Recently in a gathering of teachers two college presidents stated emphatically that teachers should be treated as are other workers in other lines; that after passing the examination for certification to teaching, they should be judged on the merits of their work alone.<sup>39</sup>

## The CTF in Politics

The next few years were very trying ones for the CTF. Again, they were confronted with much divisiveness and internal conflict. It looked at times as if the board's politics would destroy the organization.

Such was the situation in 1904 when Misses Haley and Goggin decided to campaign for a mayoral candidate. The straw that broke the camel's back was the mayor's attitude (Mayor Harrison again). He had rescinded his campaign promise, ignoring a referendum on municipal ownership of public utilities.<sup>40</sup> Not only that, but with such tight money, no one was attempting to amend the ninety-nine year leases that certain companies, like the Chicago Tribune, were holding on downtown school lands. They were paying an outrageously low rent.<sup>41</sup>

As previously noted, their campaigning was rewarded when Judge Edward Dunne was elected in June, 1905. A month later he appointed seven new members — one-third of the board (seven board members were up for reappointment each year). Among these new three-year appointments were Mrs. Emmons Blaine (Colonel Parker's mentor) and Miss Jane Addams. The teachers began to feel like their situation was improving, but they had not yet learned how fragile Jane Addam's help could be.

By early 1906, the school board had decided to use the tax money that they were going to get for teachers salaries. Also, Cooley had modified his system although it still was not acceptable to the teachers. He approached the school management committee chairman, Jane Addams, with his modified plan first and asked her what she thought.

She in turn called a meeting at Hull House of Margaret Haley, Ella Young and Dr. Cornelia DeBey (another new Dunne board appointee) to ask their advice. Margaret spoke first, before even seeing the modification, and said that it was the teachers whom she should be asking; that she could not presume to speak for them, but that they were very capable of objectively considering the plan. Ella agreed with Margaret and so did Cornelia DeBey. Jane wondered what she would do if Cooley objected to asking the teachers. Margaret again said that in her position as chairman she had all the authority she needed. And again Ella and Cornelia agreed. Jane said she would follow their advice.

That was a Tuesday. Margaret heard nothing on Wednesday, so on Thursday morning she telephoned Ella who told her to meet her at the train station, and she would explain as they rode into "the loop." Upon their meeting Ella said that Miss Addams had called her the previous night to explain what had happened. Apparently, Jane had told Cooley of her plan. He at first approved; then Wednesday night, he came over to Hull House and said that his influential newspaper editors told him that he need not do this because Dunne would never be reelected the following year, and the teachers would not need to have a voice.<sup>42</sup> Jane refused to say what editors these were. Margaret could tell that Ella was dissatisfied at this turn of events ("visibly upset" was her later recollection). Ella said that "Miss Addams was wholly unfit to cope with Mr. Cooley and ought not either to go alone or be sent alone to put such matters to him because she always lost out."<sup>43</sup>

At the next board meeting the modified Cooley plan was approved, although the rules had to be suspended to get it voted upon. Jane Addams not only voted for the plan, but she also voted to suspend the rules. In both cases hers was the deciding vote! Later she told Margaret that she saw the plan as a compromise which was better than nothing.<sup>44</sup>

Essentially, the plan allowed teachers to substitute five courses of thirty-six hours each for the reexamination. The courses had to be taken at an accredited institution. The Normal was included; it was the only one for which Cooley specified only two courses a year. Nothing was said about how many courses per year could be completed at other institutions, an omission which would prove embarrassing to him later.<sup>45</sup>

By spring 1907 seven more Dunne appointees were added to the board and after investigating the secret markings and merit system, they abolished it. Under the direction of Louis F. Post, one of the new appointees, a committee discovered the following: there were 2600 teachers (group one) who had more than seven years experience, who had not taken the exam or who had taken it and failed; 2) there were 593 teachers (group2) who had taken it and passed, thus advancing to the eighth step and beyond; 3) of the 2600, two-thirds were primary and one-third were grade teachers; 4) when holding experience and grade level constant, there were no differences between the average efficiency marks of group one and group two.<sup>46</sup>

The board then adopted a new promotion plan. The secret marking system was discarded along with percentage scores. Principals were to

share their evaluations with teachers, who were to be rated as either efficient or inefficient. If in the latter category they were to be given a probationary period. Then, if they were dismissed recourse lay in a hearing before the board.<sup>47</sup> "Efficient" teachers would automatically advance toward the maximum salary level.

In February the 2600 teachers were advanced and when the secret markings were exposed it turned out that virtually all teachers had been rated at eighty percent or above by their principals sometime during their careers. Principals, who were receiving salaries of \$2500 to \$3500 themselves, hated to be responsible for holding teachers back. This new report and policy erased much of the conflict and bitter feelings existing among the teachers who had already known that the rating system was unfair.<sup>48</sup> Newspapers reported that Cooley would fail to be elected in July and that the board would be looking for a new superintendent.<sup>49</sup>

The glory was short lived, however, because Judge Dunne lost the 1907 election to Fred Busse who was much less interested in political and educational reform than his predecessor. One of his first educational efforts was to ask for the resignations of most of the Dunne Board members - Mrs. Blaine and Miss Addams exempted. When the members refused to resign, he had them forcefully removed.<sup>50</sup>

From May 1907 to January 1908 the deposed board members wrangled with the action in court. By January 15 they were legally reinstated, but it was too late in certain respects. They had been ousted long enough for Cooley to be reelected and for the modified Cooley plan

to be readopted. The salary advances for the 2600 teachers were also rescinded. This was all done at a July board meeting.<sup>51</sup>

When school resumed in fall, the 2600 teachers were again in a quandry as to how to proceed. They knew of a few teachers who had taken five, thirty-six hour courses at the Art Institute in about six months time, and Superintendent Cooley had approved their advancement to level eight. However, they had no proof and all written or verbal inquiries into this resulted with the Superintendent saying that they could not take more than two courses a year. They asked Miss Haley's advice, but she refused to take such responsibility.

In October fifteen brave teachers enrolled in five art courses each. In January they submitted their work and requested advancement from Cooley. He approved their requests and sent his recommendation to the board on January 15, 1908. This was at the first meeting of the reinstated Dunne appointees. The Dunne members proceeded with care. The advancement was based on the efficiency ratings of the year 1906-07 (the year the files had been opened). In a written communication they asked Cooley if this met with his approval; he said it did and at their next meeting, January 27, they had Cooley's letter put into the record, and the advances were approved.<sup>52</sup>

Cooley had been suffering all year from severe headaches; he had been granted a leave of absence for six months starting in April. He was going to Europe to study Germany's school system with its technical training. He was apparently not paying much attention to his hectic job.<sup>53</sup>

Miss Haley called for a meeting with building representatives from every school. She presented copies of the fifteen teachers' requests, Cooley's recommendation for their advancement, and his letter to the board. They took this information back to their schools. By early May approximately 1500 teachers had completed five thirty-six hour courses at the Art Institute. They submitted their work for salary advancement and at one of the May meetings the board approved their requests.<sup>54</sup>

When Cooley returned in September he was furious, but there was little he could do, except prevent it from happening again. He spent the fall investigating the situation and looking for loopholes. Finding none, he still removed the Art Institute from the list of accreditations. This made some board members angry, because they were patrons of the institute.<sup>55</sup> It was discovered later that one of the reasons for the Cooley plan to start with was lack of funds - although Cooley's salary had been advanced from \$7,000 to \$10,000. One older board member (not a Dunne appointee) stated that they never intended to pay those salary advances, that the board was acting dishonestly and should have told the teachers to take the courses if they wanted to but that pay increases would not result.<sup>56</sup>

#### Cooley's Departure

The whole series of events were disastrous for Cooley. He had failed to keep the teachers in line on the salary and promotion issue. He could not get along with the board's president, Otto Schneider, a



Busse appointee. He had let some members of the Dunne board, along with the teachers, put a "fast one" over with the Art Institute. His headache must have grown worse, because in March 1909 he tendered his resignation, stating poor health as his reason.<sup>57</sup>

By the beginning of March Mr. Cooley was preparing to leave for Boston. He had accepted the presidency of the D. C. Heath Company at an annual salary of \$25,000.<sup>58</sup> Many people were not surprised at his move to a textbook company. The teachers had long known of the political biases associated with textbook choices. One teacher had been fired for refusing to use a book that many teachers and parents thought worthless. They knew of Cooley's connections with textbook officials.<sup>59</sup> In fact, teachers had long lamented their inability to voice their opinions and influence textbook choices. The grade teachers were not sorry to see him go.<sup>60</sup>

The board, on the other hand, had asked him to reconsider his resignation, but he had held firm.<sup>61</sup> He had not always gotten along so well with boards, however. In his earlier years he had used what he knew about their political connections to get something he wanted.<sup>62</sup> By March of 1909, though he found himself compatible with most members — there were only five liberal Dunne members left.<sup>63</sup>

The principals held a farewell banquet for him at which Mrs. Young spoke.<sup>64</sup> She also invited him to the Normal before he left but he sent this letter and a cherished picture of Pestalozzi instead:

March 5, 1909.

I tried to find time to run down to the Normal School to bid you good-by and to look after the picture, but I couldn't make it. Then, too, I dreaded to try to make a

talk to the students. With all my tenacity and willingness to fight, I am a bit of a sentimentalist. I have mingled a good deal of sentiment with my thought of the best things for the Chicago schools, and I am bound to the Normal School by many ties of sentiment. From my election [as Principal of the Normal School] in 1899 to the following June, when I became Superintendent, my thoughts and aspirations were bound up with the welfare of that institution, and most of my fights for some years after were about its policies and management....

The picture is connected closely with my hopes and ideals of a system of education. Many years ago I became an ardent admirer of Pestalozzi. My first public lecture was on Pestalozzi. His democratic ideals of education, his appreciation of the value of industrial education, his devotion to the child have always appealed to me....

While I was hesitating and considering the advisability of withdrawing my resignation, this picture over my desk troubled me. I thought of his sacrifices and his devotion to the schools, and I could not face him with any equanimity and comfort. This picture should be in other hands and I present it to you for the Normal School. I hope the coming teachers may be inspired by it as I have been.<sup>65</sup>

In a Bi-Monthly editorial Mrs. Young had this to say:

The resignation of Superintendent Cooley has been the subject of much comment and many wild conjectures. In both communications to the Board of Education — the one tendering his resignation, the other declining to accede to the request of the Board that he withdraw it — he assigned as his reason the probable recurrence of a physical breakdown under the strain of the duties of superintending the schools of Chicago. Certainly no one else knows so well as Dr. Cooley the reason which induced him to relinquish a position whose possibilities he prized highly.

After the tumult of conflicting interests has subsided, it will gradually become evident that much constructive work was done by him during the first eight years of the twentieth century. Many lines of procedure that have seemed to an underpaid teaching corps to be suggestive of red tape will, through experience, be made elastic; then the difficulties attendant upon the beginnings of an endeavor to systematize that which was in considerable measure chaotic will be appreciated.

The work in the elementary schools, particularly in the lower grades, has been shaped in accordance with the

principles of modern psychology in fuller measure than by all of his predecessors combined. This has been due somewhat to the progress of educational thought in America, but much more to Superintendent Cooley's championship of physical education and hand training in the formative period of life when the organism is plastic.<sup>66</sup>

He left a very disheveled situation when he departed. The board could not seem to agree on his replacement. Who could deal with such a situation and handle the teaching corps, especially the CTF? It would take them five months to decide on Ella Flagg Young.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For accounts of Cooley's early policies and the fate of the district councils see George S. Counts, School and Society in Chicago (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), pp. 110-15; Mary J. Herrick, The Chicago Schools, A Social and Political History (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971), pp. 93-113; Howard K. Beale, Are American Teachers Free? (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1936); pp. 364-65; A. E. Winship, "Twenty-Five Years of Chicago," Journal of Education 71 (16 June 1910): 685-86; Supra Chapter IV.

<sup>2</sup>Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Box 1, pp. 1-17, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois. Robert Reid, "The Professionalization of Teachers: The Chicago Experience, 1895-1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1969; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 69-1918).

<sup>3</sup>Margaret A. Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 624.

<sup>4</sup>Catharine had just recuperated from a respiratory ailment and was on her way home from a CTF meeting when she was run over by a Marshall Field's electric auto without bumpers. See "Catharine Goggin Killed by an Auto," and "Mrs. Young Praises Work of Miss Goggin," Chicago Tribune, 5 January 1916, p. 1, col. 6-7; Margaret A. Haley's Bulletin 1 (27 January 1916): 1-45. Earlier versions of this bulletin appear as the Chicago Teachers' Federation Bulletin. Early accounts of Miss Haley's life appear in Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 1-15.

<sup>5</sup>CTF Files, Box 1, pp. 1-17.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Margaret Haley went on to fight battles for the Chicago teachers until her death in 1939. Besides salaries she fought for a teachers tenure protection, and was instrumental in a land reassessment which produced more revenue prior to the depression in the 1920's.

<sup>8</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, version II, pp. 245-46. For a full account of this episode see *ibid.*, pp. 245-70.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 265-70.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 270-73.

<sup>12</sup>While Ella was at the university she contributed \$500 to the CTF to start an educational program of their choice. They used it to engage teachers of some repute for lectures. Ella talked to the group, too. When they paid her \$125 for the many times she spoke to them, she made another contribution of \$130. See Box 1 of the CTF files.

<sup>13</sup>Haley autobiography, 1910, Version I, Installment 1.

<sup>14</sup>The State Board of Equalization was formed as a result of the Grange laws of the 1873; the board was composed of one representative elected every four years from each congressional district; the state auditor presided over the board.

<sup>15</sup>Haley autobiography, 1910, Version I, Installment 4.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., Installment 5.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. Installment 6.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 1912, Version II, pp. 1-18.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 24. At this time the CTF was made up predominantly of elementary school teachers who were women.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 29. Margaret later learned that a principal who was looking for political favor got enough other principals together to agree to send the telegrams.

<sup>25</sup>See accounts in the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Daily News, 2 May 1901. Both newspapers were leasing school property that had not been revaluated since 1886. They had a vested interest in discrediting the CTF. They were holding ninety-nine year leases and although they were supposed to be illegal the papers had avoided a revaluation.

<sup>26</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, p. 117.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 165-66.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 1911, Version II, p. 190.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 190-201; Margaret Haley, "Editorial," Chicago Teachers' Federation Bulletin 2 (14 November 1902): 4.

<sup>31</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, p. 201.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. See also CTF Bulletin 6 (4 October 1907): 1-2.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 3 (18 December 1903): 4-6 and 1 (19 September 1902): 1-2.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, p. 111.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-15. When they affiliated with the CF of L they made it clear that they would never strike. See also Haley, "Why Teachers Organizations Should Affiliate with Labor Unions," CTF Bulletin 2 (14 November 1902). See also "Why Chicago Teachers' Federation Unionized," Harper's Weekly 60 (19 June 1915): 598-600.

<sup>37</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, pp. 111-12.

<sup>38</sup>Olive Orton Anderson, "The Chicago Teachers' Federation" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1908), p. 5.

<sup>39</sup>Ella Flagg Young, "Re-Examination of Teachers," CTF Bulletin 3 (18 December 1903): 1.

<sup>40</sup>Dominic Candeloro, "The Chicago School Board Crisis of 1907," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 60 (November, 1975): 397; Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, p. 123.

<sup>41</sup>Candeloro, pp. 396-97; Herrick, pp. 104-108.

<sup>42</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, p. 165.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 167-68.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. See also CTF Bulletin 5 (11 May 1906): 1-2.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-71; CTF Bulletin 5 (19 October 1906): 1-4.

<sup>47</sup>Candeloro, pp. 398-99; Chicago Tribune, 3 December 1906, p. 9, col. 1. See also CTF Bulletin 5 (19 October 1906): 1-4; 5 (16 November 1906): 1; 6 (7 December 1906): 1; and 6 (14 December 1906): 1-3.

<sup>48</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, p. 171.

<sup>49</sup>The Chicago Chronicle, 10 April 1907, p. 3, col. 1 and 11 April 1907, p. 6, col. 2.

<sup>50</sup>Louis F. Post, "Revolutionary School Proceedings," The Public 10 (1907): 176. Busse had sent police to each of their homes with letters of resignation. They later attended the board meeting on May 27, but it was adjourned because there was no quorum. Board of Education. Proceedings of the Chicago Board of Education for the Year 1906-1907 (Chicago: Jones Stationers, 1907), pp. 1114-16.

<sup>51</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, pp. 173-74.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 176-77. See also CTF Bulletin 7 (January 1908): 8.

<sup>53</sup>Board of Education. Proceedings of the Chicago Board of Education for the Year 1908-1909 (Chicago: Jones Stationers, 1908), p. 3.

<sup>54</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, pp. 177-78; CTF Bulletin 7 (May-June 1908): 4-5.

<sup>55</sup>"Art Institute is Flayed by Cooley," The Daily Inter-Ocean, 14 January 1909, p. 3, col. 5; "Cooley in Hot Note Flays Art Institute," The Chicago Record Herald, 14 January 1909, p. 3, col. 1. As normal principal Mrs. Young also signed the communication dropping the Institute.

<sup>56</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, pp. 177-79.

<sup>57</sup>"Cooley Will Step Out," The Chicago Record Herald, 10 February 1909, p. 9, col. 6; "Cooley Quits; Resignation is Sent to Board," 13 February 1909, The Daily Inter-Ocean, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>58</sup>"Cooley Is Undecided," The Daily Inter-Ocean, 9 February 1909, p. 12, col. 1; "Cooley Quits," *ibid.*, 13 February 1909, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>59</sup>"Art Institute Is in School Quarrel," The Daily Inter-Ocean, 15 January 1909, p. 1, col. 5. Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, notes preceeding p. 1. For a fictionalized version of the textbook struggle in Chicago see Mary Ronald. "Chalk in the Bartown Schools," The Delineator 75 (May 1910): 415-16. Catharine Goggin recommended another book by the same author under the real name instead of this pseudonym. It was a fictionalized account of the happenings in Chicago. See Minnie J. Reynolds, The Crayon Clue (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1915), pp. 1-375.

<sup>60</sup>Box 1, Folder 1, CTF Files. There are various items and correspondence expressing relief at Cooley's departure and apprehension at who will take his place.

<sup>61</sup>"Cooley Stands by His Resignation," The Daily Inter-Ocean, 17 February 1909, p. 5, col. 1; "Board Lands Cooley; Asks Him Not to Quit," The Chicago Record Herald, 16 February 1909, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>62</sup>Herrick, pp. 81, 93.

<sup>63</sup>Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Fifty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1909, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup>"Cooley to Be Guest of Honor at Banquet," The Daily Inter-Ocean, 21 February 1909, p. 3, col. 6.

<sup>65</sup>Young, "Editorial"; Educational Bi-Monthly 3 (April 1909): 326.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 327-28.



## CHAPTER 9

## REACHING THE TOP - THE SUPERINTENDENCY

In many respects, Edwin Cooley was no doubt relieved to bid farewell to the Chicago school battleground for a \$25,000 Boston presidency. He was being hit from all sides now. He told a friend that "he couldn't get along with the board President to save his life."<sup>1</sup> The Art Institute turmoil had created too much friction and dissension, and he had created too many enemies. By March the board members were bickering among themselves, with the teachers, and even with Mayor Busse.

## Internal Strife

Most of the board's ill will was an outgrowth of their action to comply with Cooley's resolution to drop the Art Institute from the accredited list.<sup>2</sup> The Dunne appointees (the minority in this situation) wanted to reopen the investigation. The original "investigation" had been conducted by four members of the finance committee of the school board. They had met a few times in secret before recommending the adoption of Cooley's resolution to drop the Art Institute from the accredited list. A majority of the board had then approved it.

The Dunne appointees felt that there were too many unanswered questions such as: 1) What kind of quality work did the teachers do; 2) Why did the finance committee investigate an educational matter coming under the school management committee's jurisdiction; 3) What would happen to teachers who were currently finishing work at the

Institute. Attempts at bringing these questions up at February 1909 board meetings were met with deferrals. Finally, the Dunne appointees drew up a minority report with resolutions revolving around those three issues. They were prohibited from presenting the report by a majority vote because of its "scandalous and impertinent character."<sup>3</sup>

The Dunne minority decided to try to at least get their concerns in the record. They presented a written communication to the board. Again, the Busse majority refused to consider their statement because of its "scandalous and impertinent character." Exasperatedly, they made a last attempt to be recorded as objecting to such reasons for exclusion. This, too, was denied for that very same reason -- it was scandalous and impertinent.

At the meeting during which their final efforts were rebuffed (March 24), the minority members began leaving one by one. A quorum to do business was then lacking, and it looked like the impasse would tie up the board indefinitely.<sup>4</sup> By the next scheduled meeting, however, the row was forgotten for all intents and purposes. The minority group returned. Business was conducted as usual.

During the spring of 1909, a majority of the board was in open disagreement with the Chicago Teachers' Federation over certain bills to be presented before the state legislature. The board, under President Otto C. Schneider's direction, was lobbying for two bills: 1) the "charter bill" which would reduce the size of the board from twenty-one to fifteen members, and vest more authority in City Hall; and 2) the "commercial bill" which granted ninety-nine year leases without revaluation to companies renting school land.<sup>5</sup>

The bill sponsored by the CTF was known as the teachers' bill and was designed to put more revenue into the educational fund to be used for salaries. It stated that seven-eighths of the revenue in the fund should be used on salaries. Repairs and maintenance were to be paid out of the building fund. It also contained a tenure clause, plus one for a stable salary schedule that would not be subject to the whims of board and city politics.<sup>6</sup>

The teachers were strongly opposed to the board's bills, and Schneider said the teachers' bill was dangerous for the implied control that teachers would have, especially with the tenure clause.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of May the charter bill had been killed, and the board asked the teachers to back a compromise bill. The board was willing, said Schneider, to support the seven-eighths salary provision if the CTF would relinquish its insistence on tenure and the stable schedule.<sup>8</sup> The teachers agreed and the resulting compromise was seen as a victory by both sides. The bill passed both houses, and by June it was law. The commercial club bill also became a law at the same time.<sup>9</sup>

Another bill must be mentioned. It was called the Ettelson bill, and it became a law shortly after the two mentioned above (on July 1). It was designed as a step to regulate textbook graft by forcing school systems to advertise for bids at least two weeks before choosing books. It also regulated maximum prices of books and required textbook companies to register with the state before they could bid. The registration had to include maximum and minimum book prices. The Ettelson law was especially pertinent to Chicago where it was

discovered that for the previous year students had paid considerably more for the same book than had students in Indiana towns.<sup>10</sup>

Charges of textbook price fraud led the Dunne minority to again seek an investigation, but a majority of the Busse members were opposed. They boycotted June meetings — the last meetings before expiration of the remaining seven Dunne members' term — and there was no quorum for business.<sup>11</sup> Two Busse appointees threatened to resign at such practices, but Mayor Busse convinced them to stay on until this book scandal was over.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the summer the Ettelson law was ineffective because major publishers were refusing to register. Under these conditions schools could not advertise for bids. The courts later negated the registration provision of the law.<sup>13</sup>

These difficulties were enough to occupy the school board's attention, but there was also the question of selecting a new superintendent. On this issue Mayor Busse became more directly involved. The two principals' clubs wanted a Chicago man — not anyone in particular — for superintendent. They had met to draw up a straw ballot comprised of Chicago people. Their meetings were fairly secret but Schneider discovered them and told them that the board would not consider such a ballot.<sup>14</sup> A few of the principals decided to see the mayor with their recommendations.

Later Busse was reported as favoring a man — not a woman — from outside the city system, but either the principals did not know this or hoped to sway him.<sup>15</sup> At any rate, they called his office. The mayor's secretary gave them a Tuesday morning appointment which they kept. Shortly thereafter, when the principals received their paychecks,

they found that they had been docked for taking time off from school duties to campaign at the mayor's office. Busse had suggested to Schneider that this be done.<sup>16</sup> The principals were furious, especially since Busse had let city officials go to Springfield to campaign for legislators without docking their pay. The argument was futile, however. The principals were never reimbursed.<sup>17</sup>

To top the confusion off, board President Schneider felt that board members had not supported him very well, and he threatened to resign.<sup>18</sup> His annual report was an indictment of existing conditions - unsanitary schools, overcrowded curricula with too many fads, lack of direction by the board, poor communication between board and superintendent, and insufficient money. He even hinted at graft.<sup>19</sup>

By July one-third of the board membership was new, but divisiveness was still common. The board could not even agree on its own presidency.<sup>20</sup> Schneider, a retired manufacturer, was seeking reelection. Eleven votes were required to elect a president. Ten members were supposedly backing Schneider, but ten others wanted Alfred Urion, corporation lawyer for Armour and Company and former vice-president of the board of education. The twenty first member was in Europe (and had been for some time) for business reasons. Newspapers predicted that Urion would withdraw from the race, but by the night of the next board meeting a surprise occurred.<sup>21</sup> When the acting chairman asked for nominations, Schneider "emotionally trembling" stood and nominated Urion. The nomination was seconded, and the vote was unanimously in favor of Urion.<sup>22</sup> Again, Busse had had to intervene to convince Schneider that withdrawal would be best.<sup>23</sup>

After the election Union promised to bring unity and harmony to the board, and Schneider said he would not decide just yet whether he would stay a member. He was planning a trip abroad, he said, and would decide when he returned.<sup>24</sup> With the election settled, the board returned to the business of finding a new superintendent. Schneider had been in no hurry, as he was filling some of the duties himself. Some thought that he had wanted to be elected to the position.<sup>25</sup>

#### Mrs. Young As a Candidate

During the months from March through July, Ella was kept very busy with her activities at the Normal. Friends approached her about the possibility of her being considered for the superintendency. There was no doubt in her mind that she could competently handle the job, but there were other considerations. There was her age, for one thing. She had never felt better in her life — very healthy and energetic — but she was sixty-four years old. Then, there was her sex. No woman had ever served a major city as its superintendent. It was also rumored that Busse did not want a woman.<sup>26</sup> She wondered how the board would react to both of these considerations. However, in other respects she was well suited. The system's biggest problems centered about divisions and factions that threatened to immobilize school operations. There was no other qualified person who had the rapport with teachers that she had. She understood them and their problems. In fact, she knew every one of the 6,000 teachers by name!<sup>27</sup>

She considered the situation from every angle. There was the board itself. A superintendent really needed to be able to get along with both teachers and board members so that harmony resulted. Cooley had sacrificed teacher rapport for board relations. During the Dunne board years he had lost most of the cohesiveness that had originally brought him the job. He had begun to establish his control with the Busse board when the Art Institute fiasco caught him in its grip. Even though most board members defended him at the time, he had offended too many influential people.<sup>28</sup>

Ella realized that it was important for a board and a superintendent to fully understand where the power for each side lay. She knew that boards defined these differently — a clear understanding was necessary at the outset. She did not really share the CTF view of the board. She knew that politics could block worthwhile ventures, but she did not believe the board was only a tool for vested interest. They were a lay group who, in common with many other people, often assumed that they fully understood educational matters when they did not. She believed that some of their mistakes resulted from lack of knowledge and understanding. If the superintendent could act as a guide and provide the necessary information concerning educational problems, the board might not look like such political monsters to the teachers. She had long believed that if the chief school officer were given enough authority to fill a real leadership role, that the board, as an organ of the school system, would work in harmony with the teachers. The social accord produced by a leader "of power" rather than "in power" was a forceful point which she had advanced in her thesis.<sup>29</sup>

Ella had had experience working under a variety of superintendents and boards. She knew that the most effective school chiefs had the strong support of both the board and the teaching force.<sup>30</sup> In regard to the board, if they could agree on a choice for superintendent, they were usually ready to lend their support to that officer. This had nearly always been the case in her experience. It was only later that a board sometimes withdrew that support. This was very crucial to effective functioning, for no superintendent could work effectively for a board that did not unanimously support that executive. (This was a point that she was to consider many times before her career as school head was over.) As for the teaching corps, she knew she had their strong support. No one else could match her longstanding relationship with the teachers. This brought her back to where she had started in weighing the pros and cons of her qualifications. In true pragmatic fashion she had reflected upon the problem from every angle, bringing all pieces of information to it. What was it that President Harper had said about a city superintendency? "I can conceive of no task more delicate or more responsible, more taxing or more harassing, more helpful or more splendid than that which falls to the lot of the superintendent of schools in the city of greater New York or in the city of Chicago."<sup>31</sup> She knew she could do it; but did the board?

Mrs. Isabelle O'Keefe, the only female board member, was her persistent advocate. She was a longtime friend from the Women's Club. Busse had appointed her in 1908 and she had gained a reputation for being the silent member of the board. That had changed, however, during the spring of 1909. She had been disgusted with the board's discord



and with some of their actions. She thought the building committee had slighted the elementary schools by authorizing the construction of a new high school (Carl Schurz High School) when the grade schools needed new facilities so badly.<sup>32</sup> She did not get very far with that issue, but she was determined to make her influence felt on the superintendent question. She knew Ella would accept if she had the full backing of the board. One trouble was that some of the members did not know her personally. The fact that she was a woman did not produce much interest on their part for getting to know her better.

Choices seemed to be narrowing to four men. Two were University of Chicago professors — Alderman Charles E. Merriam and George Howland's nephew of the same name. Also frequently mentioned were Seattle, Washington Superintendent Frank Cooper and John Shoop, Chicago's vacation schools supervisor.<sup>33</sup> The latter had been Schneider's choice and as long as Schneider was president few others were seriously considered.<sup>34</sup> After Union's election the complexion of the situation changed slightly. At least her name was being sounded about some. Two board members said they knew Mrs. Young was qualified but doubted her "strength" for such a position. One of them said "I only wish Mrs. Young were a man."<sup>35</sup> Another said that he did not favor giving it to a woman "because they are almost invariably influenced by sentiment rather than cold judgment."<sup>36</sup> Others said if Shoop were nominated they would vote for him.

The nominating committee, of which Isabelle O'Keefe was a member, met and prepared a list. Mrs. Young was on it. The list was presented to the board on July 27, but they could not decide. They favored a

local person but they could not get a majority behind any one of them. Mrs. Young's sex still bothered some.<sup>37</sup> They ended up considering twenty-seven names before the night was over, but they could not agree.<sup>38</sup>

### Her Election

Ella continued her work at the Normal as if she were not a candidate. She did not want to count on being elected. Preparation of a future event, she said, was often "futile and productive of disappointments."<sup>39</sup> Mrs. O'Keefe kept her posted, however. The sole female board member was ready to take advantage of the board's immobility. Union told her after a meeting that if a majority would favor Mrs. Young he would support her, too.<sup>40</sup> Dr. Alfred Kohn, the board member in Europe, sent a letter of strong support for her. He said she was "by far the best qualified educator available."<sup>41</sup> Mrs. O'Keefe thought that she could already count on eight of the members for support. She and her friends canvassed the rest, and by July 29 the canvassers thought they had the support of fourteen.<sup>42</sup> The board meeting was scheduled for that evening. Mrs. O'Keefe had taken one other precaution. She had recommended that the board interview the six leading candidates in alphabetical order. The board had decided that this would be a good idea.<sup>43</sup> Her plan was to have the board see Mrs. Young in action because she knew they would be impressed by her personality and bearing.<sup>44</sup>

So it was all set. Of the six, the most favored besides Ella were James Armstrong, principal of Englewood High School; William J.

Barthoff, principal of Von Humboldt High School; George C. Howland, professor of romance languages at the University of Chicago and nephew of the former superintendent; and John D. Shoop, supervisor of vacation schools.<sup>45</sup>

Evening arrived, and one by one they went into the board rooms for their interviews. Because of the alphabetical order arrangement, Ella was last. Armstrong was in for a little over half an hour, but it seemed so long that reporters and others waiting thought he had the job. He came out smiling, but said he did not know. Barthoff was next, but he was in only a few minutes and came out looking crestfallen. Howland was questioned for half an hour but had no comment to make afterward.<sup>46</sup> Then, it was Shoop's turn. He was questioned around a half an hour and came out perspiring but smiling. He commented that they were very nice and did not ask hard questions.<sup>47</sup> Finally, it was Ella's turn. She was in for the same amount of time. They shot questions at her. She answered them quickly and carefully. Members on the board who did not know her well were astonished. The questions pertained to management, salaries, school fraternities and, most important of all, the Chicago Teachers' Federation.<sup>48</sup> When asked how she would handle this group, she replied that she would treat them as an "educational institution."<sup>49</sup> Union asked her about the composition of the teachers' pension fund board. He thought that if the school board had a little more importance on the pension board — say, holding the presidency — they would probably be willing to contribute more to the fund. He thought such a move would produce greater harmony, too. Perhaps, she thought about this response the longest. She said she thought the

teachers could be led to see the utility of such a move. Her answer was interpreted as tantamount to a promise. It may have been her greatest mistake to speak for a group like the CTF.<sup>50</sup> The next few years would tell.

Now, however, the interview was finished, and she felt good about it. When she came out, she called down the hall to reporters "Well, I'm still alive!"<sup>51</sup> The reporters questioned her: "What can you tell us?" "Why, it was very nice of them to give us an opportunity to go in and talk to them," she said with a "twinkle in her eye."<sup>52</sup> "Everything was all right, and the members were very kind."<sup>53</sup> She talked with the newspaper men and other candidates for awhile, until she finally said she was "more interested in supper than the superintendency and left in a car for her home in Normal Park."<sup>54</sup>

When she arrived home, President Union was on the phone to congratulate her. She had been unanimously elected on the second ballot!<sup>55</sup> Her salary would be the same as Cooley's - \$10,000. Originally the board had intended to start her lower as they had with Cooley who began at \$7,000. Mrs. O'Keefe pointed out that she was better qualified and besides that it would look like they had done it because Mrs. Young was a woman. Mrs. O'Keefe told the board that they were bigger than that. They agreed.<sup>56</sup> Her appointment was for one year. As a concession to those few who had held out for Shoop, a special assistant superintendent's job was created for him. He would be in training for the office when Mrs. (Dr.) Young left it. His salary was set at \$6,000.<sup>57</sup>

Plate 3

Photograph of Ella Flagg Young, by Mabel Sykes about 1911.

Chicago Historical Society. Used by permission.

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She was very happy, and so were the board members and the teachers of Chicago. For the next week or so magazines and newspapers carried the story. It was the first time a woman had been chosen for such a big position. Congratulations poured in from across the country. William Maxwell, superintendent of New York City said:

I regard Mrs. Young as one of the ablest educators in the United States. She is admirably equipped by training, experience, and personality to perform the duties of Superintendent of Schools. Every element in the public school system of Chicago - particularly the men - should rally in her support.<sup>58</sup>

#### A Successful First Year

One of Superintendent Young's first announcements was that her door would always be open to every one of the teachers. She would see them whenever she was free. They did not necessarily need an appointment. She said that although she, herself, never had trouble seeing Superintendent Cooley, some teachers had said they did, and she wanted to correct that. Another early announcement pertained to administration policies. "There is to be but one head of the schools of Chicago," she said, "I am it. Whenever I find that I cannot have complete charge of the educational end of the school system, I will quit. I cannot carry out my ideas unless I am given control of affairs."<sup>59</sup>

During the month of August Mrs. Young outlined some of her plans although she had not completed them. "Democratic efficiency" was to be the key note of her administration.<sup>60</sup> She also favored Cooley's plan for teaching the trades. He had secured the support of the

Commercial Club, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and other organizations. She said she would proceed along the same lines. There were at present two technical high schools, both of which were heavily attended. She hoped to equip regular high schools with manual training rooms, too, and since seventy percent of the grammar grade students never reached high schools, she planned to make some manual arts work available in the elementary school. To provide first-hand experiences in social studies to elementary pupils, the study of Chicago was added to the curriculum for the first time.<sup>61</sup>

Her first year as superintendent was hard work, but it went smoothly. She took up the task of providing more sanitary conditions within the schools. To rid the rooms of the stale air, they were flushed with outside air several times a day and temperatures were reduced to about 65 to 70° Fahrenheit. Due to living patterns many schools were terribly overcrowded while some had vacancies. Parents were encouraged to send children to the less crowded schools, but the advice went unheeded for the most part. Half-day shifts were necessary. In some buildings classes were conducted in the halls. An extensive building program was launched by the board.<sup>62</sup>

The budget that Mrs. Young prepared was approved by the board. It included a raise for the elementary teachers. They were pleased although they had hoped for the adoption of a stable salary schedule. Union had no ear for such a plea, however.<sup>63</sup> The promotion examination with its secret marking system was discarded, although Mrs. Young did encourage teachers to take courses and work towards degrees. It



was also her hope to see the Chicago Teachers' College (the Normal's new name) become a four-year degree granting institution.<sup>64</sup> In January she assumed another responsibility and honor. She was elected to the presidency of the Illinois State Teachers Association.<sup>65</sup> Again, she was the first woman to hold such an office.

There were some difficulties. Union had illegally entered into a textbook contract with the Rand Company. The schools needed the texts, but Rand had not registered. Ettelson law promoters were in the process of bringing court action against the board for doing this. The Ettelson law also fixed a maximum price list that publishers must meet. To avoid violating this latter clause the board was forced to sell the books directly to students at wholesale prices thereby side-stepping retailers.<sup>66</sup>

In spring Union fired the school architect, Dwight Perkins. The papers carried accounts of this action, which appeared highly questionable. Perkins was blamed with extravagance in his last buildings — especially a very well equipped technical high school. He proved that it was the equipment and not the building that was expensive. He presented figures from other major cities where building costs had been higher than his. Union was blind to these facts and fired him anyway with the board's approval.<sup>67</sup> It was an unfortunate happening and the only action which smacked of scandal. (One newspaper alluded to Union's anger when Perkins refused to let a contract to a firm that he (Union) owned in part.)<sup>68</sup>

Ella was not involved in this, and her first year closed on a note of success. In her annual report she stated:

The year was one of harmonious and vigorous effort on the part of teachers, principals, supervisors and superintendents. The chief reason is the teaching corps feels that the Board appreciates their work and desires to make conditions such that the profession of teaching shall be one of dignity and honor. They have always done this but never has it been so fully in control of the situation that it could make manifest its attitude.... Our cooperation is not for the success of one official or another, but for the good of the children - the hope of the nation.<sup>69</sup>

The year ended with two special tributes to her. On June 15 the University of Illinois, under President Edmund James, conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws upon her at the June graduation exercises in Urbana. A delegation of Chicago board members and principals attended.<sup>70</sup>

A week prior to this event the teaching corps under Margaret Haley's direction held a reception for her in Auditorium Theater, a well-known theater for prominent social functions. One of the teachers present recalled the evening this way:

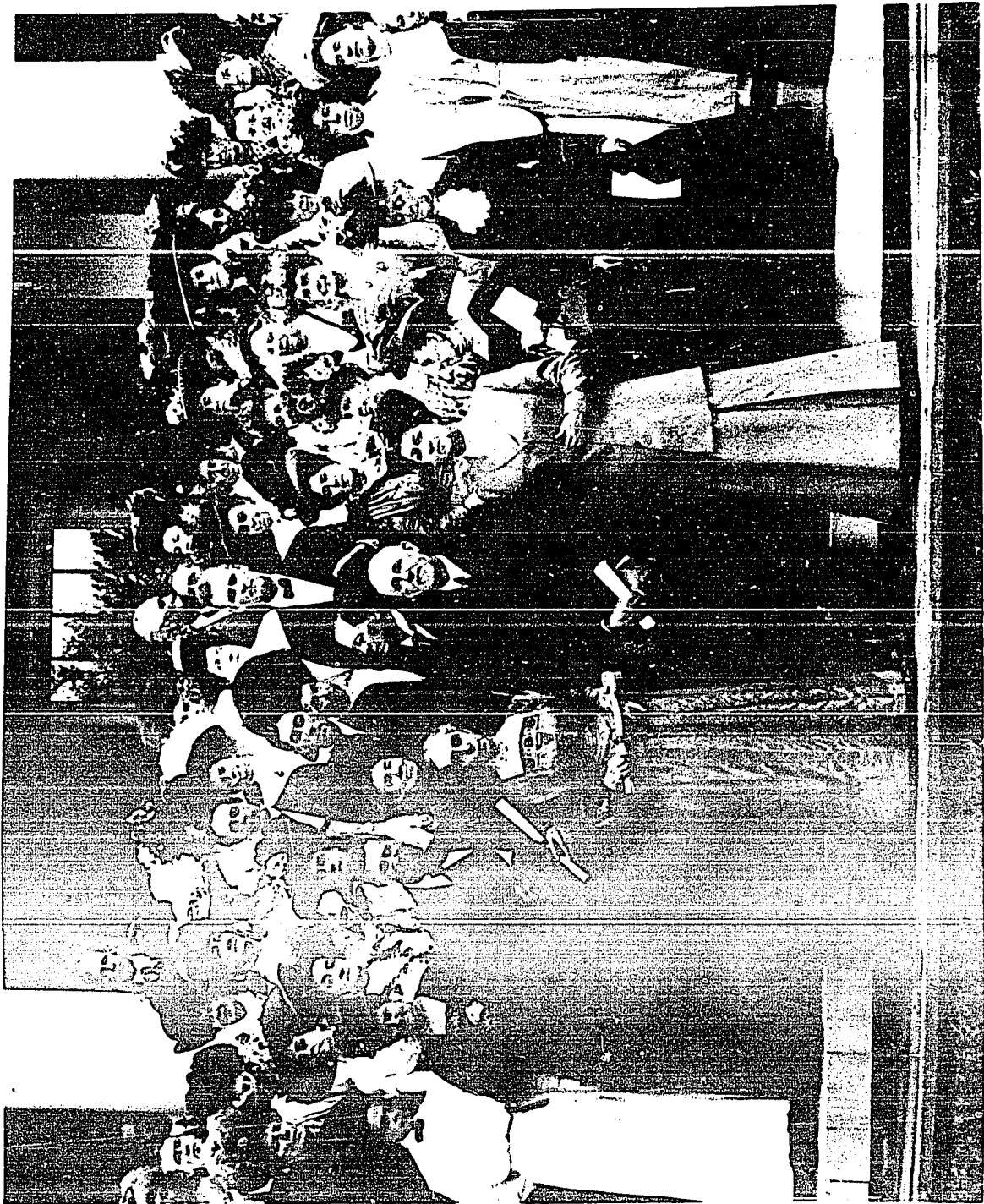
The Auditorium had never witnessed such a gathering, which outranked in numbers any of its famous society events. It saw every seat occupied, from box to balcony, while hundreds arrived too late to get in and witness the affair. A reception committee of two hundred and fifty teachers were ready to assist, and a guard of honor of two hundred school children stood to escort Mrs. Young to the platform raised in the centre of the floor. Each child carried a long-stemmed American Beauty rose, held aloft to form an arch under which she might pass, and then, falling in behind her, after she had ascended the dais, they laid their flowers to form a wall of roses at her feet.

Mrs. Young declined to occupy the throne-chair provided for her, preferring to stand, and insisting on shaking hands with every one in line. 'I am not tired. I shall not be tired. Why, I am too happy to be tired.' And although always noted for her quiet taste in dress, she evidently felt the desire to fittingly grace this auspicious occasion, and she appeared in a plain slip of white satin, veiled in beautiful lace, simple yet rich.<sup>71</sup>

Plate 4

Photograph of Ella Flagg Young and others on the occasion of the University of Illinois granting her an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, 1910.

Enlarged approximately four times from an original in the Archives, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.



It was a great tribute to her and was considered by many as the symbol of a unified school system.<sup>72</sup> One newspaper saw it as part of her "boom" for the NEA Presidency. She had consented in May to run for that office.<sup>73</sup>

Plate 5

Photograph of Ella Flagg Young and others on the occasion of the University of Illinois granting her an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

Enlarged approximately ten times from an original in the Archives, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Megan and Roberts to Quit Jobs?" Chicago Record Herald, 10 June 1909, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Suppressed Records of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago, 10 page printed document in Box 40, Folder 1, Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 2-7.

<sup>4</sup>"Trustees on Strike; Tie Up School Board," Chicago Record Herald, 25 March 1909, p. 3, col. 5; "Documents in School Row Dug Up by Post," Daily Inter-Ocean, 28 March 1909, p. 4, col. 3.

<sup>5</sup>"School Bill Assailed," Chicago Record Herald, 24 April 1909, p. 2, col. 5; "To Advertise for School Book Bids," Daily Inter-Ocean, 21 April 1909, p. 12, col. 1, and "Two School Bills Passed by House," *ibid.*, 26 May 1909, p. 5, col. 1. The charter bill made the board of education a department under City Hall and thus, subject to even more political pressures. It also contained the same ninety-nine year lease clause as the commercial club bill. They were both sponsored by the commercial club, although only one carried its name. The CTF abhorred the charter bill.

<sup>6</sup>"Permanent Salary Fund Teachers' Aim," Daily Inter-Ocean, 11 March 1909, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>7</sup>"Teachers Stir Up Row," Chicago Record Herald, 13 March 1909, p. 4, col. 7; "School Fight Is Hot," *ibid.*, 28 April 1909, p. 6, col. 3; "Federation Bill Boils President Schneider," *ibid.*, 30 April 1909, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>8</sup>"School Forces Agree and End Long Fight," *ibid.*, 22 May 1909, p. 5, col. 1; "Halt Teachers' Was by Compromise Plan before Legislature," Daily Inter-Ocean, 22 May 1909, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>9</sup>"Two School Bills Passed by House," *ibid.*, 26 May 1909, p. 5, col. 1; "School Bills Passed," Chicago Record Herald, 26 May 1909, p. 2, col. 3.

<sup>10</sup>"Megan and Roberts to Quit Jobs," *ibid.*; "Chicago School Pupils Victimized on Book Prices," Daily Inter-Ocean, 13 April 1909, p. 1, col. 1; "Schneider Defends School Book Firm," *ibid.*, 9 June 1909, p. 3, col. 1; "Offers Home-Made School Books at Saving of \$420,000," *ibid.*, 10 June 1909, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>11</sup>"Busse Men Prevent Textbook Inquiry," *ibid.*, 1 July 1909, p. 3, col. 2.



<sup>12</sup>"Busse's Business School Board on Verge of Breaking," *ibid.*, 13 June 1909, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>13</sup>"Choose Textbooks for the Coming Year," *ibid.*, 29 August 1909, p. 4, col. 3.

<sup>14</sup>"Vote on Cooley's Job," Chicago Record Herald, 4 March 1909, p. 6, col. 1.

<sup>15</sup>"Dark Horse Likely for Superintendent," Daily Inter-Ocean, 26 July 1909, p. 5, col. 1. By July 26 all the candidates were from Chicago. Those close to Busse said that he disapproved of all of them.

<sup>16</sup>"Trip Costs School Heads Day's Salary," *ibid.*, 30 April 1909, p. 12, col. 4; "School Principals Aroused by School Docking," *ibid.*, 4 April 1909, p. 6, col. 1.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>"Busse's Business School Board ...," Daily Inter-Ocean, 13 June 1909.

<sup>19</sup>"Megan and Roberts to Quit Jobs," Chicago Record Herald, 10 June 1909; see also Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Fifty-Fifth Annual Report of the Chicago Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1910 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1910), pp. 11-26.

<sup>20</sup>The seven new Busse appointees were a surprise to most people. He reappointed Dr. John Guerin, a Dunne appointee, and added Rev. Walter T. (Dean) Sumner, a Catholic priest with a reputation for social reform. A lawyer and liberal named Julius Smietanka was also named, and he had originally turned down Dunne because he was too busy. See "School Board Hopes Engulf Mayor Busse," Chicago Record Herald, 13 June 1909, p. 2, col. 1; "Busse School Board a Surprise Package," *ibid.*, 7 July 1909, p. 3, col. 1; "Busse Names Seven New School Trustees; Guerin Holds Place," Daily Inter-Ocean, 7 July 1909, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>21</sup>"Schneider Gains in School Board Fight," *ibid.*, 11 July 1909, p. 3, col. 1; "Plot to Depose Head Racks School Board," Chicago Record Herald, 10 July 1909, p. 3, col. 1; "Call Schneider Victor in School Board Fight," *ibid.*, 12 July 1909, p. 3, col. 5.

<sup>22</sup>"Urion Is School Head; Schneider Steps Out," *ibid.*, 15 July 1909, p. 1, col. 7; "Urion Elected as School Board Head by Unanimous Vote," Daily Inter-Ocean, 15 July 1909, p. 1, col. 4. See also Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago for the Year 1909-1910 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1910), pp. 1-2.

<sup>23</sup>"Union Is School Head...", Chicago Record Herald, 15 July 1909.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>"Busse to Enter Fight," Chicago Record Herald, 14 July 1909, p. 16, col. 1.

<sup>26</sup>"Mrs. Young's Stock Up in School Head Race," *ibid.*, 28 July 1909, p. 11, col. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Olive Hyde Foster, "Mrs. Ella Flagg Young Teacher, Woman, Friend," Harper's Bazar 45 (April 1911): 174.

<sup>28</sup>Ella Flagg Young, "Editorial," Educational Bi-Monthly 2 (1 October 1907): 88-90.

<sup>29</sup>Supra, p. 136.

<sup>30</sup>Supra, pp. 23-25; 30-34.

<sup>31</sup>Robert McCaul, "Dewey's Chicago," School Review 67 (Summer 1959): 265 citing University Record 1 (3 April 1896-26 March 1897): 239.

<sup>32</sup>"School Board Scored," Chicago Record Herald, 2 April 1909, p. 9, col. 3. Mrs. O'Keefe was married to Attorney Patrick James O'Keefe who had been a journalist in Ireland, New York and Chicago. He was employed by Armour and Co. in a "confidential capacity" and was especially close to the late Philip D. Armour from 1886 to 1896. He was admitted to the bar in 1896. See Chicago and Its Makers, 1910 s.v., Mrs. Isabelle O'Keefe.

<sup>33</sup>"Armstrong to Be New School Head?" Daily Inter-Ocean, 20 July 1909, p. 3, col. 5; "Chicagoan in Favor as Cooley Successor," Chicago Record Herald, 16 July 1909, p. 5, col. 1; "Cooper Seems in Lead," *ibid.*, 20 July 1909, p. 10, col. 3.

<sup>34</sup>"School Peace Fails; Deadlock Still On," *ibid.*, 13 July 1909, p. 2, col. 1; "Schneider as Dictator in Row Over School," *ibid.*, 30 June 1909, p. 16, col. 2.

<sup>35</sup>"Seek 3 R's Teacher," *ibid.*, 19 July 1909, p. 4, col. 6.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>"Balk at School Head," *ibid.*, 27 July 1909, p. 2, col. 5.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>"Mrs. Young at Helm Guiding City Pupils," *ibid.*, 3 August 1909, p. 3, col. 1.

40, "Mrs. Young Will Win Is Claim of Friends," ibid., 29 July 1909, p. 5, col. 1.

41, "Mrs. Young's Stock Up...", Chicago Record Herald, 28 July 1909.

42, "Mrs. Young Will Win...", Chicago Record Herald, 29 July 1909; Chicagoan in Favor as Cooley Successor," Chicago Record Herald, 16 July 1909.

43, "Mrs. Young Elected; Shoop Her Assistant," ibid., 30 July 1909, p. 1, col. 5; "Fix Mrs. Young's Term," ibid., 31 July 1909, p. 3, col. 4.

44, Ibid.

45, "Mrs. Young Elected...", Chicago Record Herald, 30 July 1909. The sixth candidate was Frank L. Morse, principal of the Spaulding School, Chicago. He was never reported by newspapers to be a very likely contender; whereas at one time or another, the other five looked promising.

46, Ibid.

47, "First Woman Chosen School System Head by Chicago Trustees," Daily Inter-Ocean, 30 July 1909, p. 1, col. 7.

48, "Mrs. Young Elected...", Chicago Record Herald, 30 July 1909; "Fix Mrs. Young's Term," Chicago Record Herald, 31 July 1909; "First Woman Chosen School System Head...", Daily Inter-Ocean, 30 July 1909.

49, Margaret Harley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 342-45, Boxes 32-34, Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

50, Ibid.

51, "Mrs. Young Elected..." Chicago Record Herald, 30 July 1909.

52, Ibid.

53, "First Woman Chosen School System Head...", Daily Inter-Ocean, 30 July 1909.

54, "Mrs. Young Elected...", Chicago Record Herald, 30 July 1909.

55, Ibid., "First Woman Chosen School System Head...", Daily Inter-Ocean, 30 July 1909. See also Helen C. Bennett, American Women in Civic Work (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1915), pp. 255-57; supra, p. 1. The ballot was 11 to 6 in her favor. Then it was moved and seconded to make it unanimously in her favor. The motion carried.

56, "Fix Mrs. Young's Term," Chicago Record Herald, 31 July 1909.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. The title of Dr. now occasionally precedes her name. This became more common in the ensuing year.

<sup>58</sup>"Mrs. Young at Helm...", Chicago Record Herald, 3 August 1909.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.; "The Woman Chicago Needed," The Independent 77 (19 January 1914): 96.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.; "Mrs. Young at Helm...", Chicago Record Herald, 3 August 1909.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.; "In School Uplift Plan," Chicago Record Herald, 24 December 1909, p. 16, col. 3.

<sup>62</sup>Fifty-Sixth Annual Report, pp. 11-22.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.; "Will Ask \$18,000,000," Chicago Record Herald, 16 December 1909, p. 14, col. 2; "School Deal on Rack," *ibid.*, 2 November 1909, p. 6, col. 3; "Teaching the 3 R's Exalted in Chicago," *ibid.*, 27 January 1910, p. 4, col. 4; "Salary Plan Divides Teachers," Daily Inter-Ocean, 2 November 1909, p. 10, col. 1; "Keeps Scandal of School Sites Down," *ibid.*, 4 November 1909, p. 9, col. 7. "Mrs. Young's School Budget Is Approved," *ibid.*, 2 February 1910, p. 7, col. 2.

<sup>64</sup>Fifty-Sixth Annual Report, pp. 75-100. See also "Mrs. Young Changes Examination Rules," Daily Inter-Ocean, 11 May 1910, p. 3, col. 4.

<sup>65</sup>"Mrs. Young Heads Teachers," *ibid.*, 31 December 1909, p. 3, col. 6. This presidency automatically made her head of the State Board of Education.

<sup>66</sup>"School Books at Cost," Chicago Record Herald, 4 September 1909, p. 3, col. 2.

<sup>67</sup>"Perkins Is Deposed as Head Architect at School Hearing," *ibid.*, 1 April 1910, p. 1, col. 3; "Verdict in Perkins Case Expected Today," Daily Inter-Ocean, 1 April 1910, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>68</sup>"Acrid Talk by Union Halts Perkins' Trial," Chicago Record Herald, 26 March 1910, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>69</sup>Fifty-Sixth Annual Report, p. 100.

<sup>70</sup>Edmund J. James to Ella Flagg Young, 11 March 1910, and Young to James, 14 March 1910, Series 2/5/3, Box 25, Ella F. Young Folder, President Edmund J. James General Correspondence 1904-1919, University Archives, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. James had been Dean of the University College of the University of Chicago when Ella was teaching in it. Their friendship dates from then.

<sup>71</sup>Foster, p. 174.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>"Thousands to Greet Ella Flagg Young," Daily Inter-Ocean, 29 May 1910, p. 1, col. 5.

## CHAPTER 10

## THE NEA PRESIDENCY

In Chicago Mrs. Young's first year of leadership was heralded by the press. In July 1910 she was appointed to a six months' term, not because the board was dissatisfied, but because they were permanently changing the superintendent's election from July-June to a calendar year.<sup>1</sup> In December 1911 she was unanimously elected for another year.<sup>2</sup> Her second school year in office (1910-1911) was virtually as successful as her first, but she found herself busily engaged in a battle on a different educational front - the National Education Association.

## A Perspective

In early May members of the Chicago Teachers' Federation approached Ella to ask her to run for the presidency of the NEA. No woman had ever held the office, but they thought her chances would be good in this particular year for several reasons. The National Federation of Grade Teachers, whose members were nearly all women, had been gaining in strength and numbers since its inception at the Chicago meeting in 1899. (Then it was called the National Federation of Teachers.) From that summer on they had held their meetings concurrently with the NEA convention.<sup>3</sup> Until 1903 their group had been relatively inconspicuous, but at that year's meeting in Boston the tide changed. Attendance at their sessions, in which Ella had been one of their speakers, outnumbered the NEA attendance.<sup>4</sup> The tone of

the meeting that year was one of national protest over low salaries, lack of tenure and concern in general about teachers' working conditions. Their voice was heard. Fearing unionization on a national scale, the NEA leaders felt compelled to order an investigation of the above-mentioned issues. It turned out to be a feeble attempt amounting to little, but it was an acknowledgment of the group's existence from a powerful organization.<sup>5</sup> At the Boston meeting they became known as the National Federation of Grade Teachers.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the Grade Teachers organization the women teachers had gained status in the NEA itself. They had gone from not being allowed to sit on the convention floor in the 1880's, to being seated in the 1890's, and finally to being recognized by the chair at the Detroit meeting in 1901.<sup>7</sup> Margaret Haley happened to be the first woman to be so recognized. At Chairman A. E. Winship's acknowledgment, she stood from the floor and questioned the autocratic policies of "ring leaders" — William Torrey Harris and Nicholas Murray Butler in particular. Harris had just finished "putting the audience to sleep" with platitudes about how wonderful the educational horizon looked. Margaret had just started her tax fight. His remarks did not fit with her experiences.<sup>8</sup> She said just that. Harris retorted by admonishing the group to pay no attention to her remarks which were nothing more than an "hysterical outburst" from Chicago which was the "morbid and cyclonic spot of the United States."<sup>9</sup> Margaret's reply made Harris look rather silly. She again questioned the tight control of a few NEA members. She also explained what Chicago teachers were doing in their tax fight. When Harris realized who she was he

apologized apparently out of fear that she might take him further to task. Afterwards many congratulated her. One man, in particular, who had worked under Harris when he was St. Louis' superintendent, said that he had waited years to see him (Harris) get such a "dressing down."<sup>10</sup>

Margaret Haley made other gains in the NEA. At the 1903 meeting referred to above, she questioned a Butler amendment so effectively that his amendment lost on the vote. The amendment was designed to give the president of the organization more control over the nominating committee which drew up the annual slate of officers.<sup>11</sup> In 1905, she appeared before a Senate subcommittee that was investigating the legality of changing the NEA charter from local to federal status. She pointed out that the federal charter fundamentally altered the NEA constitution, and that this was illegal without one year's notice to the members. This, the governing board had not done. Despite the rather panicky defense of Harris to the contrary, the subcommittee ruled in favor of Miss Haley and the charter was passed with a referendum clause attached.<sup>12</sup>

In 1906 there was no meeting. It had been scheduled for San Francisco, but the earthquake prevented the occurrence. In 1907 and 1908 women teachers had taken a more active participation than ever before. A growing number had paid the dues to give them an active status (denoted by a blue badge), so that they could participate in all formal meetings.<sup>13</sup>



## Ella's Candidacy

When the CTF delegation, headed by Catharine Goggin and Margaret Haley, approached Ella to be a candidate, she said she would provided that there was no other women running in the "same manner."<sup>14</sup> By the "same manner," she meant from the floor. Everyone knew that a majority of the NEA nominating committee would not likely put a woman on their slate of officers. If her name had been discussed by the committee, however, someone on the committee could nominate her from the floor by means of a minority report. The minority report would have to be substituted for the majority report (the committee's slate), and then the floor would have to approve it.<sup>15</sup>

The CTF sent letters to representatives across the country telling them of Mrs. Young's candidacy, provided no one else was running, and asking for their support.<sup>16</sup> The returns from this correspondence were promising and nothing more was done about it during most of May 1910. Margaret was busy planning the Auditorium Theater reception discussed in the preceeding chapter. The reception was designed to act as a pledge of support to boost her NEA candidacy. "Maggie" especially hoped to "fire up" the principals so that they would attend the convention in Boston. Their support, if they stayed home in Chicago, would do little for her election.<sup>16</sup> She was so busy preparing the Chicago support that she neglected the national side of the campaign.

Meanwhile, some women who were important in the larger picture of this endeavor were feeling very neglected. Grace Strachan was a district superintendent in New York; Katherine Blake was a principal

in that city and a member of the nominating committee.<sup>17</sup> They had said they were willing to help, but they expected to receive direction and close support from Chicago. None had been forthcoming. They were losing interest and considering, though not seriously, "booming" their own candidate. This represented nothing more than mild irritation, but Ella got wind of it and decided to withdraw her name. One Sunday in early June she wrote a letter to the committee chairman withdrawing her name from the list to be considered. Before mailing it, she telephoned Margaret and told her what she had done and why.<sup>18</sup> A. E. Winship, editor of the Journal of Education and longtime friend of both women, was at Margaret's home. When she told him what Mrs. Young was planning to do he grabbed the phone and said "don't mail the letter, I'll be right over."<sup>19</sup>

When he returned, he explained to Miss Haley that he had talked her out of withdrawing for the moment, but they needed to check into the rumor that someone else was running. They sent telegrams and made telephone calls to friends in the East who would know if the rumor was based in fact.<sup>20</sup> It took a day or two to hear, but all reports were the same; they knew of no one.<sup>21</sup> A few days later Catharine Goggin received a letter from a friend in New Jersey. This lady said that while it did not matter to her, she had seen Katherine Blake recently, and Katherine wanted to know what was going on in Chicago and why they were not running a better campaign. She also said that both she and Grace Strachan were about ready to lose interest in the whole affair.<sup>22</sup> When Maggie heard this she went immediately to work. She sent a telegram to Katherine and followed this with long letters of

profuse apologies saying that she had gotten too involved with the reception and was fully to blame. They wrote back accepting the apology, and said that the New York delegation was still planning to support Mrs. Young.<sup>23</sup>

Miss Haley no longer ignored the larger picture. Together with representatives from the principals' clubs she sent out campaign circulars with accompanying letters requesting NEA members to support Ella Flagg Young for the association's next president. Nearly everyone who replied to this communique was supportive. President Edmund James of the University of Illinois wrote back:

...I shall be glad to do anything I can to help secure the election of Mrs. Ella Flagg Young as president of the National Education Association. I am not certain yet whether I can get to Boston or not, but if I should be able to do so you may count on my doing everything I can to help the matter along.<sup>24</sup>

#### Mrs. Young's Election

The important week approached. Caucuses were to be held on Saturday, July 2, but the election would not take place until the business meeting on Thursday, July 7 and then it would be open to active (blue badge) members only.<sup>25</sup> The nominating committee of forty-nine members met and for president it had selected Zacharia Xenophon Snyder, principal of the Normal School at Greeley, Colorado.<sup>26</sup>

Thursday arrived. The Chicago principals had not let Mrs. Young down. They were there in force. The committee slate was presented for approval. Katherine Blake stood from the floor and presented the following motion:

As a member of the nominating committee in which the vote for nominee for President was comparatively close, I have the honor of presenting as a minority report to this convention the name of Mrs. Ella Flagg Young of Illinois as nominee for President for the ensuing year, in place of Z. X. Znyder, of Colorado, named for that office in the report just presented. I understand that the presentation of such a report as I am making is without precedent in the annals of this Association, and I am glad that this woman, who has been breaking records ever since she started, is breaking the record of this Association now. I know of no healthier sign in an organization than a contest for the presidency. It means that it is of value; that the members are alive and active.... Mr. President, I move the substitution of the minority report for the majority report.<sup>27</sup>

The convention then voted 617 to 376 in favor of substituting the minority for the majority report.<sup>28</sup> Mrs. Ella Flagg Young was elected president of the NEA, and the "old guard" was on the defensive.

#### Her Year as President

One of Ella's first official duties before leaving Boston was to call a meeting of the Board of Directors of the NEA. A description of this board will illuminate her role in the forthcoming year of her presidency. This board was made up of forty-nine representatives of the various states and possessions, plus officers, life directors, past presidents, and the U.S. Commissioner of Education. Within this board four members were elected to staggered four-year terms as trustees of the Association and Permanent Fund — a trust based on membership dues and invested as the trustees chose. The declared value of this fund in 1910 was over \$170,000.<sup>29</sup> One of the four was chairman of the trustees and assumed the most responsibility for care and maintenance of the fund. As President of the Association, Dr. Young

presided over the meetings of the Board of Directors and served as an ex officio member on the Board of Trustees.<sup>30</sup>

With respect to the Permanent Fund, many rumors had arisen. There was apparently some speculation that the "book value" of some of the stock was less than the trustees were reporting. Also, since January 1909 \$23,000 had been invested in long-term railroad bonds, some of this at the lowest interest rates in the fund's history. No municipal or school bonds had been purchased since 1908, although these had been yielding better returns than the recent railroad purchases. Ever since Newton Dougherty, superintendent from Peoria and a member of the Board of Trustees, had been sent to prison for illegal financial dealings, many NEA members had wondered about the condition of the fund.<sup>31</sup> No investigation of the value of the stock had ever been conducted, although annual pilgrimages by someone designated by the NEA president had been made to the Chicago bank which held the securities. The act of incorporation called for this investigation, although it only verified that the bank actually held the stock certificates claimed and said nothing of their worth.<sup>32</sup>

At the meeting of the new board of directors over which Ella presided on July 7, two trustees were to be reelected: Carroll G. Pearse, Superintendent from Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University and former chairman of the trustees.<sup>33</sup> Both were reelected although Butler was not present. Another director Augustus S. Downing of New York reported that Butler wished not to be reelected. Butler had informed him by letter, but when asked if he would produce the letter he said that he preferred not

to do so. Butler was then reelected.<sup>34</sup> After deciding on San Francisco for their next convention site, the meeting adjourned.<sup>35</sup>

When the trustees — Henry B. Brown, James M. Greenwood, Carroll G. Pearse and Ella F. Young — met they were without a chairman. They, therefore, elected H. B. Brown to serve in that capacity. Trustee Young asked some questions about the Permanent Fund but got few answers. The next meeting was scheduled for Chicago in winter.<sup>36</sup> Ella returned to Chicago to resume her superintending.

During September questions were put to her by various persons concerning the NEA fund. On September 23, Secretary Irwin Shephard wrote her threatening to discredit her with charges of a fraudulent election in Boston. This was connected to her intended investigation.<sup>37</sup> Shephard's letter had been prompted by a newspaper interview in which she said that she was going on with an investigation of the Permanent Fund and that Shephard and Butler (by his absence) were trying to inhibit her progress.<sup>38</sup> This even alarmed A. E. Winship, her long-time friend and supporter. Speaking of her newspaper interview, "Mrs. Young has had some bad advisers," he wrote to Margaret Haley. "...If she did have a 'Record-Herald' interview, which I persist in believing that she never had, she has put her friends in a hole, from which it will not be easy to crawl out."<sup>39</sup> Why she would be putting "her friends in a hole" is unclear; he did wish that she had never implicated Butler with inhibiting an investigation. Supposedly, Butler was in Europe during September.<sup>40</sup>

Shephard favored Mrs. Young with another letter and another threat of disgrace:

I regret that I have not been favored with any reply to either my telegram or my letter of September 23d. I fear you misunderstood my spirit and purpose. I wished only to aid you in correcting as speedily and thoroly as possible a newspaper report which I believed had misrepresented you, since it misrepresented in the most serious manner all the facts in the case. I have seen the report of your second interview with the Chicago Tribune. I do not find in it any essential modification of your original statements, but, instead, your statement that you were not misquoted in the original interview, as I had assumed.

Referring to your implication that Dr. Butler is in some way blocking the investigation which you proposed, you should know that he is still in Europe, has no knowledge of such a proposition for a meeting as you refer to, and probably knows no reason, as indeed there is no reason, why he should accept or decline his re-election as trustee before his return to this country.

In view of this very serious public attack on the Association's good name and the widespread publicity thruout the entire country given it thru the Chicago papers and the Associated Press, I deem it my duty to transmit to them for information copies of the telegrams, letters, interviews and newspaper reports bearing on this matter, so far as I am able to obtain them.<sup>41</sup>

If nothing were wrong with the funds then why all this activity?

Ella's determination grew stronger to get to the bottom of this.

Butler returned from Europe on October 25, and said that he was resuming his trusteeship and apparently the chairmanship.<sup>42</sup> Now, Ella was planning an executive council meeting on Saturday, November 23 in her office of superintendent. She sent notices to everyone but Butler.

The chairman of the Board of Trustees was a member of the executive council, but according to their Boston meeting the chairmanship belonged to Brown.<sup>43</sup> She had the meeting but Chairman Brown did not attend.

A former student of his at Valparaiso and now a Chicago teacher questioned him about his NEA position. She later told Margaret Haley that he wept when she asked him, saying that President Butler could crush

any private, preparatory or normal college in the country (his was a normal); that he had to do what he was doing.<sup>44</sup>

It seems doubtful that Butler was directly involved in whatever was being guarded, but it does not seem doubtful that people, like perhaps, Secretary Shephard needed his support and power to steer them out of their difficulties. Unfortunately the evidence available does not clarify the motivation behind these actions and those that followed Ella to San Francisco; but due to the jeopardy they imposed upon her it will be useful to record them here.

Ella planned to attend a meeting of the trustees that winter in Chicago. In mid-January she received the following notice:

At the call on request of Chairman Butler, Vice Chairman Greenwood, and Acting Chairman Brown, a special meeting of the Trustees of the National Education Association will be held at the Hotel Manhattan, Madison Ave. and Forty-Second St., New York at 12:00 noon on January 23 [1911] for the interaction of such business as may be brought up before the meeting.<sup>45</sup>

She notified Carroll Pearse in Milwaukee (or he notified her, perhaps). They weighed the situation and with his help, she decided to stay in Chicago giving the following as her reasons: 1) the meeting did not specify what business was to be taken up; 2) the next adjourned meeting was to be called for Chicago according to what was decided in Boston; 3) Brown's title of "acting chairman" was irregular; and 4) she took issue with Butler signing himself as chairman since he was "nothing of the sort."<sup>46</sup> She had also been refusing to co-sign vouchers coming from Butler, because she did not consider him to be the appropriate authority. This did create minor problems with creditors.<sup>47</sup> If nothing else, she had nerve. After hearing William



James lecture on how people become inhibited from pursuing natural impulses by parents and friends Margaret Haley once said

Mrs. Young impressed me as one who was not inhibited as a child from responding to normal stimuli. She must have had some great advantage in her early development which made for quick translation of impressions into expressions through action.... It was a liberal education to watch her as she considered a matter and then reacted to her thought... here was free play of mind in all matters.<sup>48</sup>

Pearse was intending to go and report to her. He went. He reported to her, or at least he must have, because there was never another word about an investigation of the funds. He did report to Margaret Haley. She was in the CTF office one afternoon shortly after the New York meeting. Pearse walked in looking all dishevelled and ashen-faced. He was unshaved and a nervous wreck for his usual calm "icicle like" manner. All he could say was "They're going to kill Mrs. Young. I mean it. They're going to kill Mrs. Young."<sup>49</sup> Margaret took him into her private office. "He was nearly insane," she said later. She could not, at the time, understand what she was supposed to do, because he also kept saying that she must not tell it publicly. Because of his state she did not know how trustworthy this information was and she was afraid that she would just alarm Mrs. Young.<sup>50</sup> She later realized that he had probably wanted her to warn Mrs. Young. At any rate, he must have warned her himself when he had calmed down.<sup>51</sup>

Ella became very quiet about the fund. She continued that spring to plan the program for the convention: The theme was to be "What Is a Teacher?" She had asked Mrs. Anita Blaine to present a paper on "The Opportunity of a Teacher."<sup>52</sup> She also asked Grace Strachan to prepare "The Life of the Teacher" (probably wondering if it was longer than

the life of a superintendent). They both consented.<sup>53</sup> She wrote her President's address, "Hypothesis in Education," but could not decide if it was right. She was afraid it was "too heavy" and that "she had not made her point strong enough."<sup>54</sup> She enlisted the help of a teacher-friend at Normal, Mrs. J. Rose Colby: "I am asking you to give about fifteen minutes to the reading of my President's address for San Francisco," she wrote. "It always seems a great flop when I talk shop — I can't seem to dress it up. Please don't refuse — it is short."<sup>55</sup> Such self-doubts for all the papers and lectures she had given were most usual.

By the end of June she was not feeling too well. By July 2, she had developed a severe rash all over her body. Friends, even her doctor, advised her against the trip. She refused the advice. She was determined to go.

#### Presiding at San Francisco

Laura Brayton and another friend, Bertha Benson, made the trip with her along with her doctor. She went in a special, private train car, perhaps for protection as much as because of her illness. She had to be wrapped in medicated sheets to treat the painful rash. Some rumors had her suspended from sheets.<sup>56</sup> The principals, teachers and even three board members — Dean Sumner, Julius Smietanka and Isabelle O'Keefe — went to support her.<sup>57</sup> The latest word from Shephard was that he had proof that she had been fraudulently elected. He would present evidence at the Board of Directors meeting.<sup>58</sup> The Chicago delegation

intended to stop this by packing the Monday board meeting. They could attend as long as they held active (blue badge) status.<sup>59</sup>

When Margaret Haley arrived she was met by a group of principals who showed her a copy of the most recent program. It said that dues receipts would be needed, in addition to blue badges, to enter the board meeting. The first printing of the programs, mailed out earlier, had not contained such a statement. Hardly anyone had brought receipts. She talked to the door checkers. They knew nothing about it; they were just to check badges. That was good, but Maggie decided to embarrass Shephard for a change. She had seen him arrive with his stack of materials under his arm — supposedly his ammunition against Mrs. Young. The newspapers consented to run an article questioning the discrepancies in the two printings. Shephard would at least have to explain himself, because someone would be certain to ask.<sup>60</sup> That was Sunday.

On Monday the Chicago delegation lined the room "four deep." Shephard arrived with his stack of materials. Then Mrs. Young arrived. She looked as though she had never been ill. The rash had cleared from her face, although hours earlier the report about her condition had been that it was as bad as it had been when she left Chicago. Pearse was present looking "very disturbed."<sup>61</sup> She called the meeting to order. Someone rose to question Shephard about the discrepancies in the program. As if she had nothing at stake, President Young calmly turned to Secretary Shephard and asked him to explain. There was silence. He did not stand. She called on him again; more silence until it seemed like the clock had stopped.<sup>62</sup> Then, she said, "The

regular order of business will be resumed."<sup>63</sup> The whole issue of fraud "fell to the floor." It was dead. Later Miss Haley said of Mrs. Young, "It was her finest hour."<sup>64</sup>

President Young even managed a mild protest against the report on the Permanent Fund given by Trustee Greenwood — Butler was absent due to his mother's illness. After he gave the report the President called attention to the fact that as a President and Trustee ex-officio her signature was missing from the report.<sup>65</sup> She asked that the following reason be spread into the record:

The signature of the President as ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees was withheld, not because of any objection to the facts of the report, but to the character of the securities in which the \$9,900 added to the permanent fund has been invested. The President holds very positive views that a trust fund should be invested in school, municipal, county, state, or national bonds; but the recent addition to the permanent fund was invested in industrial bonds. The objection is no reflection at all upon the railroad or companies in which the investments were made; but it happens to be the view of the President that the risks are too great in the case of industrial bonds — we all know the history of the Johns Hopkins University — while there are no such risks in governmental bonds. That is why the signature is withheld. I wish to repeat that I have no knowledge that the bonds that were bought are not perfectly good, but they belong to the list of industrial bonds.<sup>66</sup>

She, as president, was supposed to appoint someone to check the securities at the Chicago bank. She never did this and gave the following reason to the record.

...it is the opinion of the Chair that if a certain number of bonds and securities are deposited with a company which guarantees the safety of those bonds and securities, that it is absurd to go to the bank vaults to count those bonds each year, and that is why the Chair did not go.... Now the Chair has not consulted a lawyer, but her own judgment dictates the opinion that if securities have been placed with a bank guaranteeing the safety of the securities then the firm would be held responsible until those securities

are taken away, and it is almost childlike (yet it is called for in the Constitution and By-Laws) to examine those securities from year to year, to see that the guarantor has not taken anything out. I trust that explains a very simple situation.<sup>67</sup>

The concern lay in their value, not in their physical presence.

Later on (in 1920) Winship was to tell Margaret Haley that the big fracas in 1911 was due to the fact that "they had invested in some kind of paper that was no good."<sup>68</sup>

Butler sent a letter of resignation thanking all for their support. Upon his return from Europe he said he was particularly overwhelmed by the letters and telegrams from most directors and living presidents urging him to continue to serve despite Director Downing's words which he (Butler) had asked him to convey. So he had served during 1910-1911. However, now (July 1911), he was ready to resign:

I beg herewith to tender my resignation as a Trustee of the National Education Association, the same to take effect immediately, and I ask that this resignation be accepted. During my service as Trustee, I have had the satisfaction of seeing the Permanent Fund grow from \$45,000 to \$180,000 and safely invested in sound securities. If this fund shall be preserved for the purpose for which it has been accumulated, it will serve as a protection to the Association in years of deficient revenue. To protect this fund and to preserve it from dissipation has been the policy of the Trustees for a quarter of a century, and I sincerely hope that it will never be departed from.<sup>69</sup>

The rest of the week went without a hitch. Ella was feeling better. She spoke to a suffrage association meeting towards the end of the week. On Thursday Pearse was elected President.<sup>70</sup> Her year was over. She relaxed and returned home.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago for the Year 1909-1910 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1910), p. 915; Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Fifty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1910 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1910), p. 11. Chicago papers carried various accounts of her success during the year.

<sup>2</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education ... for the Year 1910-1911, p. 507.

<sup>3</sup>Margaret Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, pp. 64-111 and 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 98-99. Boxes 32-34, Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 98-102.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 266-67.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 69; 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 103-106.

<sup>11</sup>Haley autobiography, 1911, Version II, pp. 98-102.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>13</sup>The National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-Sixth Annual Meeting Held at Cleveland, Ohio, July, 1908 (Winona, Minn.: The Association, 1908), pp. 1-9; Edgar B. Wesley, NEA: The First Hundred Years (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1957), p. 287. Hereafter this journal citation will appear as Proceedings and Addresses, year.

<sup>14</sup>Catharine Goggin to Elizabeth Allen, 4 May 1909, Box 40, Folder 2, CTF Files.

<sup>15</sup>Proceedings and Addresses, 1910, pp. 33-34.

<sup>16</sup>See the various items of correspondence in Folder 2 of Box 40, CTF Files. See also Ida Mighell to Edmund J. James, 23 June 1910, Series 2/5/3, Box 25, Ella F. Young Folder, President Edmund J. James

General Correspondence, 1904-1919, University Archives, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

<sup>17</sup>Elizabeth Allen to Margaret Haley, 18 June 1910, Box 40, Folder 2, CTF Files. See also Wesley, pp. 326-27.

<sup>18</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 94-96.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>20</sup>Identical telegrams from Haley to John Dewey, William McAndrew, Laura Plummer, Katherine Blake, and Grace Strachan, 20 June 1909, Box 40, Folder 2, CTF Files.

<sup>21</sup>Individual telegrams from Dewey, McAndrew, Plummer, Strachan and Blake to Haley, 21 June 1909, Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Allen to Haley, telegram, 19 June 1910, Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Haley to Strachan, 20 June 1910, Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>James to Mighell, 25 June 1910, James Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Circular (printed letter), Principal's Club, 22 June 1910, James Papers, Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>"Mrs. Young Heads NEA and Women Teachers Triumph," Daily Inter-Ocean, 8 July 1910; p. 1, col. 3; Proceedings and Addresses, 1910, pp. 31-33; Wesley, pp. 326-27.

<sup>27</sup>Proceedings and Addresses, 1910, p. 33.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., Wesley, p. 326. In a footnote on p. 326 Wesley cites an interview in which Miss Blake says that there were actually first herself and Winship who voted for Mrs. Young out of the forty plus members of the nominating committee. This interview was granted in the late 1930's when few, if any, others could attest to it. The newspaper accounts during that time (July 1910) state that the nominating committee had tried unsuccessfully to get two others to run on the slate (prior to Snyder) but they had refused for fear of being defeated by Mrs. Young. See daily accounts in the Chicago Tribune, Record-Herald, Daily Inter-Ocean and Boston Post for the period, 2 July 1910 to 7 July 1910. By 1912 Miss Blake and Miss Strachan had reason to dislike Mrs. Young and Miss Haley. They had intended the Chicago group to support Miss Strachan for NEA President, but Chicago had refused. See Chicago newspapers for 12 July 1912. Miss Blake also told Miss Haley, prior to July 1912 that she wanted Miss Strachan to be NEA President because Miss Strachan could then become New York City's superintendent and she (Miss Blake) a district superintendent. See Haley autobiography, 1934-35, p. 289.

- <sup>29</sup>Proceedings and Addresses, 1910, pp. 1-8.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 99; "Mrs. Young Ignores Butler as Chairman," Chicago Examiner, 23 November 1910, Clipping in Folder 4, Box 40, 1910, CTF Files.
- <sup>32</sup>Proceedings and Addresses, 1910, p. 4. See also Proceedings and Addresses, 1911, p. 38.
- <sup>33</sup>Proceedings and Addresses, 1910, p. 49. Actually Pearse had been reelected by the old board the previous day. He had been forced to resign because of a written communication from Butler and Greenwood which contested his legitimacy as a Trustee. After he resigned, however, the Board of Directors reelected him. Butler did not attend any of the Boston meetings.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 51.
- <sup>36</sup>"NEA Clash Gets New Impetus," Chicago Record Herald, 23 January 1911, p. 3, col. 1.
- <sup>37</sup>Irwin Shephard to Ella Flagg Young, 8 October 1910, Box 40, Folder 4, 1910, CTF Files.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid. See Chicago Tribune for 22 September 1910, and 23 September 1910.
- <sup>39</sup>A. E. Winship to Haley, 6 October 1910, Box 40, Folder 4, 1910, CTF Files.
- <sup>40</sup>Shephard to Young, 8 October 1910, CTF Files.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup>Proceedings and Addresses, 1911, pp. 40-41; "NEA Clash...", Chicago Record Herald, 23 January 1911. Rumor had it that Shephard had asked Directors to send letters to Butler begging him not to quit as a Trustee.
- <sup>43</sup>"Mrs. Young Ignores Butler as Chairman," Chicago Examiner, 23 November 1910, CTF Files.
- <sup>44</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 275.
- <sup>45</sup>"NEA Clash...", Chicago Record Herald, 23 January 1911.



<sup>46</sup>Ibid.; "Mrs. Young in New Row," Daily Inter-Ocean, 23 January 1911, p. 3, col. 5.

<sup>47</sup>"NEA Clash...", Chicago Record Herald, 23 January 1911.

<sup>48</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, preceding incidents on Mrs. Young's NEA campaign, pp. 7-8.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., Version IV, p. 275.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Young to Mrs. Emmons Blaine, 24 June 1911, Series 1E, Box 785, Ella Flagg Young Folder, Blaine Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Young to J. Rose Colby, 17 April 1911, David Felmley Papers, Archives, Milner Library, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 95-97.

<sup>57</sup>"1,000 Pupils Fight for Work Permits," Chicago Record Herald, 27 June 1911, p. 7, col. 5.

<sup>58</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 101.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Proceedings and Addresses, 1911, p. 38.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>67</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 99.

<sup>68</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 99.

<sup>69</sup>Proceedings and Addresses, 1911, p. 41.

<sup>70</sup>"NEA Convention Discusses Problems," Daily Inter-Ocean, 12 July 1911, p. 2, col. 2.

## CHAPTER 11

## TROUBLE AT THE TOP

With the exception of her NEA struggles, the period from July 1909 to Winter 1912 was calm for Ella as superintendent. This time was also fruitful as far as accomplishments were concerned.<sup>1</sup> However, during the twenty-two months following this period — February 1912 to December 1913 — the wind shifted, picking up a momentum that swept her with it, so that by the summer of 1913 she was contemplating resignation.

## Accomplishment during the Calm

Those first two and a half years witnessed an expansion of the manual arts curriculum at all levels of schooling. Superintendent Young succeeded in making these programs, along with the academic side, available to all students who were interested in them. For example, at the elementary level the course of study looked very similar to those offered earlier in Parker's and Dewey's schools and in her own organization of practice schools at the Chicago Normal.<sup>2</sup> As much as possible the subjects in the course of study were tied to first-hand experiences through field trips, handcrafts and other self-expressive activities. The "three R" work was not neglected; instead it was incorporated in a (hopefully) more meaningful way to the student. In each grammar school a room to be equipped with manual arts materials was planned for the grammar (upper) grades.<sup>3</sup> Students in grades six through eight could choose between a general course and an industrial

one, so that they could be better suited to their courses in high school or their trades after grammar graduation.

At the secondary level, two-year vocational courses were made available to every high school student. These courses covered the following areas: 1) accounting; 2) stenography; 3) mechanical drawing; 4) design; 5) advanced carpentry; 6) patternmaking; 7) machine-shop work; 8) electricity; and 9) household arts.<sup>4</sup> Students could receive credit towards graduation from the four year course at the two technical high schools in the city. Plans were in operation for a girls vocational high school. This was opened as the Lucy Flowers High School in 1912.<sup>5</sup>

At her suggestion the board of education approved programs in ethics and morality and sex hygiene.<sup>6</sup> The latter subject, known as personal purity, was to consist of a series of lectures to be given by male and female doctors to boys and girls in segregated classes. The first ones were given during the fall of 1912.<sup>7</sup>

At the suggestion of Mrs. O'Keefe penny lunches were started in all of the grammar schools. The preparation of such lunches became part of the household arts curriculum for the upper grammar grades.<sup>8</sup>

The Ettelson law for regulating textbooks had its day in court. The school board based its defense for entering illegal contracts with book companies on the fact that the schools could not be run efficiently without texts.<sup>9</sup> Ettelson backers tried to refute this line of argument. It was Mrs. Young's testimony that swayed the decision in favor of the board. She said that texts were necessary to school efficiency.<sup>10</sup>

By the Spring of 1911 former President of the board Otto C. Schneider resigned from the board.<sup>11</sup> On the recommendation of Superintendent Young, the Art Institute was returned to the accredited list. It took the board three minutes to approve this.<sup>12</sup>

During this two and a half year period there were some rough spots, too. The teachers received a salary increase for the 1910-1911 and 1912-1913 school years, but throughout the 1911-1912 school year the board pleaded lack of funds.<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Young still lamented low salaries, however, in her annual reports.<sup>14</sup> High school sororities and fraternities had evoked enough public hostility to force the board to adopt rules designed to eliminate them. They were hard to destroy, because they tended to go underground and become secretive. Some parents favored their continuation. Mrs. Young was, however, responsible for enforcing the board rule.<sup>15</sup>

The 1912 NEA meeting was held in Chicago. By the end of the meetings, the New York delegation headed by Misses Strachan and Blake were so angry with Mrs. Young and the Chicago delegation that they threatened to permanently withdraw from the NEA and start their own organization.<sup>16</sup> The conflict stemmed from the fact that Grace Strachan wanted to be president. She had fully expected Mrs. Young to support her, but Ella refused to commit herself one way or the other as did Margaret Haley and the CTF.<sup>17</sup> The two New York women asked New York's Mayor Gaynor to write a letter to Chicago's Mayor Harrison (reelected again in April 1911) suggesting that he use his influence on Mrs. Young to gain her support for Miss Strachan.<sup>18</sup> Harrison refused, Miss Strachan

was not elected, and the New York delegation went home angry and embittered.<sup>19</sup>

Politics affected school board leadership by December of 1910. President Alfred E. Union tendered his resignation, giving ill health and professional responsibilities as his reasons.<sup>20</sup> Union, who was general counsel for Armour and Company, was heavily involved, in that company's litigation over Grand Jury indictments for conspiracy and monopoly.<sup>21</sup> At the December 28 board of education meeting, Dr. James B. McFatrach was elected to succeed Union as president.<sup>22</sup> At an earlier December meeting, the board appointed Secretary Lewis E. Larson to act as their new business manager, with the new civil service code, for a salary of \$10,000.<sup>23</sup> Later, he would be assuming duties that had belonged to the superintendent. McFatrach strongly supported Ella's vocational policies and the change of leadership went smoothly.<sup>24</sup> A year later, however, the clouds were gathering. One of the early signs was a new practice the board developed. They began creating special committees and referring many of the superintendent's recommendations to these before consideration was given.<sup>25</sup>

#### The Storm Brews

In February 1912 Margaret Haley was campaigning for woman suffrage in the Western states when she received a letter from Catharine Goggin. "Mrs. Young feels a little anxious," wrote Catharine and she outlined why. First, because of its new committees the board had not given the superintendent the same endorsement that she felt it had in the past.

Second, salaries had been approved, without her consultation. Third, three of her recommendations for principalships had recently been turned down. "I have seen Miss Brayton," Catharine went on. (Laura Brayton had given up her teaching job and was serving as confidant and private secretary to Ella.) "I know from the way she spoke that the superintendent has been troubled by [these] new developments."<sup>26</sup>

By summer rumors were developing that Mayor Harrison no longer supported her policies. To set the matter straight the mayor wrote the following letter to Mrs. Young:

A rumor ... has been reported to me ... that the city administration is unfriendly to you in a further tenure of office as Superintendent of schools and is backing the candidacy of some other educator for this position ....

I feel assured that if these rumors have reached your ears, you have given them no credence ....

As far as I am advised the schools have never prospered more than under your management. I feel the best interests of the schools will be conserved by your retaining your position as long as you are able to perform its duties.<sup>27</sup>

Ella wrote back:

Your letter ... is appreciated. The rumor reported to you came to me very recently by way of a newspaper reporter who said he was sent by the paper because of the reliability of the source from which the information came. Since the municipal election in 1911 I have been questioned frequently as to your attitude toward me in my present official position. I have unvaryingly replied that the attitude ... as manifested by father and son had given evidence through many years that the superintendent of schools would be removed by Mayor Harrison when the educational division began to retrograde; not before.

The questions of the recent rumor have not given me concern as to my tenure of office; they have made me realize that if continued they would arouse in me a sense of the futility of attempting large movements in the schools.

The generous tone of your letter is deeply appreciated. I trust time and events will bear evidence of my earnest desire that your administration be all that your friends can desire.<sup>28</sup>

By the end of July Mayor Harrison had appointed eight school board members. Four were reappointed and four were new. One of the new board members was a lawyer named William Rothmann.<sup>29</sup> He had served as chairman of the police pension fund under Mayors Dunne and Harrison at the time that this fund's interest had been found missing. For the seven years of his chairmanship, the annual \$20,000 interest was never deposited. A commission headed by Alderman Charles E. Merriam investigated the fund and discovered this abuse. The episode was never mentioned by most newspapers and Rothmann quietly resigned. The commission informally concluded that the interest was not pocketed but rather fed into the political machinery.<sup>30</sup> This appointment would turn out not to set well with the CTF. Shortly, he would also become chairman of the board of education finance committee.<sup>31</sup>

The fall proceeded much the same as before. Special committees were appointed, and the superintendent's recommendations for a new series of readers was not approved.<sup>32</sup> At the first December board meeting, however, Mrs. Young and Mr. Shoop were unanimously reelected to their respective positions of superintendent and assistant superintendent.<sup>33</sup>

By the second December board meeting the biggest windstorm to date hit: the board took the course of study out of her hands.<sup>34</sup> The board decided that there were too many "fads and frills" in the elementary curriculum such as sewing and other handwork. They appointed



another special committee to look into a revision that would remove the frills and emphasize the "three R's." Mrs. Young was visibly upset. "Everytime I start to do anything," she said, "a committee is appointed to take the work out of my hands. It makes one wonder," she continued, "if one can accomplish anything."<sup>35</sup> It must have been quite a blow to her to hear talk of abolishing the very activities that she felt made the academic basics more meaningful to students.

A second important board appointment came in January. A real estate agent named Jacob Loeb was named to fill the vacancy left by the death of Dr. John Guerin, an original Dunne appointee and author of the "back to the three R's" movement.<sup>36</sup> The situation was still going from bad to worse for Ella. During late winter and early spring two bills concerning the teachers' pension board were written. One came from the board (Urion) and provided for the following: 1) that the trustee make-up should be four board members, four teachers, and the superintendent as ex-officio; 2) that the finance committee chairman should be head of the pension board; and 3) that the board should be compelled to match the teachers' contributions dollar for dollar with an option to double it.<sup>37</sup> (At present they were only required to match the interest with an option to match the teachers' contributions as well.)<sup>38</sup> The other bill was a retaliatory effort from the CTF. It maintained provisions in the 1907 bill - membership of six teachers to three board representatives and the compulsory interest matching clause.<sup>39</sup>

Urion called Mrs. Young into a conference and explained to her that he had never interfered with her operations, but this one time he

wanted her to convince the teachers that a larger board representation would increase their revenue.<sup>40</sup>

The CTF had wanted a better compulsory revenue clause but not at the expense of the teacher-board ratio. Margaret Haley approached Ella one day shortly after her meeting with Urion and asked the superintendent if Urion and the board would ever approve the dollar for dollar clause.<sup>41</sup> The superintendent said that he would be more amenable if the representation was more even. She told Margaret that she had originally told Urion in her July 1909 interview that she would try to do this. Now he was asking her.<sup>42</sup> Miss Haley looked a little surprised and disappointed, but she said the teachers would have to decide. Mrs. Young agreed.

At the next school board meeting teacher representatives, including Margaret Haley, were invited to attend. Rothmann and Urion explained the board's pension bill. Rothmann — who as chairman of the finance committee would head the pension board under Urion's plan — was strongly in favor of the measure. Urion asked the teachers' representatives what they thought. A couple of them said they approved but most said they would not presume to speak for the teaching corps. Rothmann then said that they would put it to a vote of all the teachers. Upon leaving Miss Haley commended Rothmann and promised not to try to sway the teachers one way or another. Then, he smiled "devilishly" and told her that by not disapproving she had already approved of the bill.<sup>43</sup>

Margaret did not understand this. She started asking questions about this Rothmann and discovered what the Merriam commission had found out.<sup>44</sup>

She set about documenting the evidence, writing it up and printing it, so that it could be presented at the next CTF meeting.

In the meantime the situation was growing more complicated for Ella. The board, under Rothmann's lead, printed the ballot with a statement saying that the CTF endorsed it. Ella, who had not talked to Margaret since the earlier meeting, was told that the CTF approved, but she did not check on it. She told Rothmann to give them ten days to return the ballot. She then left town on a speaking trip.<sup>45</sup>

The ballots went out but with a shorter deadline than Ella had stipulated.<sup>46</sup> When she returned in a day or two, Miss Haley telephoned. Margaret told her that the ballot was wrong, that the teachers' representatives had not approved the bill and that the ballot was due within a few days. The time was too short for the teachers to get the information about Rothmann.<sup>47</sup> Ella said she must be mistaken, but after checking found that Margaret was not wrong. She at least corrected the date of the ballot return. That was a Saturday. They now had less than one week left. On Monday Margaret made quick arrangements for the Rothmann expose circular to be printed for the Tuesday CTF meeting.<sup>48</sup>

Ella spent the weekend pacing back and forth trying to decide how to proceed. If the circular came out before the ballots were in, the teachers would probably not approve the Union Bill. Ella knew how badly Union wanted the bill to become law. She was also sure that the teachers' interests would be safe. Recent reform efforts had resulted in laws which prohibited pension board managers from spending the interest on anything other than the pension fund. She did not think

this would carry much weight with the teachers, however. One thing might help. The teachers had been a long time in waiting for salary increases. She thought the board would likely approve increases now — if the circular did not come out. The next school board meeting was on Wednesday. The CTF meeting was on Tuesday. The ballots were due on Friday. If the teachers were to draw up a petition requesting their salary increase, it could be presented on Wednesday. The CTF would still be able to circulate the Rothmann information before the ballot was due — if they still wanted to do so. On the other hand, if the teachers were satisfied with the salary increases, they might forget the circulars. She doubted it, but it was worth a try. She would do what she could to carry out her promise to Union.<sup>49</sup>

By Tuesday Ella had decided how she would proceed. She made arrangements to talk with CTF President Ida Fursman at her (Ella's) home (now in the LaSalle Hotel) after school and before the CTF meeting. She intended to explain to Ida that there was a good chance of a salary increase to be approved the next day if Ida could bring it up at the CTF meeting and get the petition signed and turned into the board in time. It was obvious, or so Ella thought, that the teachers would then have to choose between the circular and the salary increase. Rothmann, chairman of the finance committee, would certainly not recommend an increase if the teachers dealt him a bad publicity blow.<sup>50</sup>

Then, however, the unexpected happened to a plan that was a long shot anyway. Ida got the message to see Mrs. Young. First, however, she stopped at the CTF meeting, where everyone was waiting for the circulars. She announced that she had a meeting and that they should

proceed without her. This meant that as soon as copies of the circular arrived they would proceed with a vote on whether or not to print and distribute copies to all the teachers in Chicago. Mrs. Fursman met with Mrs. Young. Ida Fursman was a very dear and honest woman — hardworking, too — but she was rather naive.<sup>51</sup> The skills of diplomacy were not her forte. She listened and listened to Mrs. Young, but she just could not get what the Superintendent wanted. Ella, in diplomatic fashion never mentioned the circular or the pension. She wanted Ida to understand that the time might be ripe for salary increases; that it had to be done quickly to make tomorrow's board meeting (that was the hard part for Ida to understand without mentioning the circulars or the pension), and that she could bring it up at the CTF meeting if it was still convened.<sup>52</sup> Ella approached it every way she could. Finally, she asked Ida what they were doing at the meeting. Ida said that they were waiting for the circulars when she left. Then, slowly the sun rose for Mrs. Fursman. She said, "When I left them they were waiting for the circulars. Would that make any difference?"<sup>53</sup> She phoned the meeting, but it was too late. The circulars had arrived and most of the teachers had gone home.<sup>54</sup> Superintendent Young had lost this round for Union, and she knew it.

When Ida described what had happened in her meeting with Mrs. Young, Margaret could not believe that Ida did not understand. She laughed. It was ridiculous. "You're such a fool," she said affectionately to Ida, "Who could believe that anybody that has reached your age could be so innocent?"<sup>55</sup>

## The Storm Hits

At that Tuesday meeting of the CTF, the members voted to distribute circulars to every teacher in the system.<sup>56</sup> When the circulars arrived there were many questions. The CTF decided to hold a mass meeting where questions could be answered and Rothmann could even defend himself if he was so inclined. It was scheduled for Thursday after school.<sup>57</sup> When the meeting convened it was chaos. The acting chairman - William B. Owen, Ella's successor at the Normal - could hardly get the meeting called to order. Finally, he established order, but both Miss Haley and Mrs. Young asked for the floor at the same time. Owen did not know whom to recognize, so he asked the pleasure of the convention. "Amidst the cries of 'let her speak'" and "'no, no, no,' [the superintendent] left the [room] because she thought she had been denied the floor."<sup>58</sup> Owen sent a messenger after her and upon her return she was granted the floor.

I was pleased when this meeting was called today. I felt sure of you. I thought you would not give yourselves and me a black eye the first thing. You are so primed with this you cannot think of anything else. Nevertheless, it will be all right.

There are several points I want to make ... with regard to the reason why in the beginning I was in favor of this bill .... Mr. Union summoned me to his office and said he wished to talk with me about the pension and he said, "Now, you can, so far as I am concerned, you can swing things in the educational line department your own way, with the exception of ... [the pension] and ... I am going to do something.

... Now, in regard to the chairmanship of the Board of Trustees. I have gone into that matter quite fully. I know that many of you under the leadership of Miss Haley and Miss Goggin know a great deal more about city government than most any other body of teachers in this country. I am not going to take time and be called to order by the chairman but

will say that one of the greatest pleasures to me in coming back to the teaching force was in meeting the teachers and finding the condition of affairs, and I knew that it had come through the direction of the Federation, — and yet, with all that, here I am differing today with your leaders on the question of the chairman of the committee on finance of the Board of Education. You know that in the past the treasurers of city, of county and of state funds held their right to take the interest, and it is only in the last few years that reforms in government have come forward and established the fact that they have no right to the interest, although there are still those who hold that since those treasurers take care of the money and run the risk of the care and furnish large bonds, that they have a right to the interest. I don't take any stock in that at all .... If I had found that Mr. Rothman was not what we mean by the word "responsible," I would not have stood one minute here in his — I cannot say defense, but in explanation of his connection with the pension board.<sup>59</sup>

Rothmann never arrived. Miss Haley answered questions and so did Charles Merriam who did come. The meeting was dismissed.<sup>60</sup> When the teachers voted, their preference was against the Union Bill. Out of 5,500 pension fund contributors the vote was 1683 to 1397.<sup>61</sup> Mrs. Young lost again. What was worse was that more and more it looked like she was being pitted against the teachers.<sup>62</sup>

She still had to see the bill through the legislature downstate. The battle was strong there. Miss Haley and the Union forces engaged in bitter combat before the subcommittee. When Superintendent Young appeared it was a welcome change of pace for the legislators. The senators were impressed with her "mild manner and apparent grasp of the situation."<sup>63</sup> She said that she did not care who controlled the board but that she was for the Union bill, because it gave teachers the needed revenue.<sup>64</sup> Miss Haley continued to lobby for the CTF bill, and it won passage.<sup>65</sup> Mrs. Young had her final defeat from the teachers. It would never happen again.

## More Textbook Troubles

It was time to choose a new speller. Mrs. Young knew that the present one was inadequate. The teachers had complained about the book, and she knew that most of them wanted a new one. This was not a simple question of selecting the book most approved by the teachers, however. Too many special interests were involved. James Plunkett was peddling a spelling book that seemed inadequate and too expensive. She was not interested, but some of the board members were.<sup>66</sup> Plunkett threatened her in a most ubiquitous fashion. He even said one time that he was calling from the mayor's office and that the mayor was supporting him. Plunkett went on to say that he was "out to get her scalp."<sup>67</sup> Her patience was tried. She asked the board to refer the question to a committee, but the harrassment did not stop. Finally, she brought up at a board meeting the pressures from Plunkett and two board members. A majority of the board wanted her to name names. Very reluctantly she mentioned the two board members who had tried, with Plunkett, to influence her decision.<sup>68</sup> The two were Henry Huttman and John C. Harding.<sup>69</sup> Huttman grew silent and said that he had nothing to say. Harding was angry and accused her of slander. She explained that she was not accusing him of graft just requesting a certain speller — "probably, she went on" because of his labor interests.<sup>70</sup> (Plunkett's book was union made.) Huttman, she thought, was just trying to resolve the situation, and so he supported Harding.<sup>71</sup> Harding began making accusations about Mrs. Young, and Union stepped in. He said Harding had insulted the superintendent and demanded retraction.<sup>72</sup>



Harding eventually calmed down, but Mrs. Young had made a long-lasting enemy.

#### Board Hostilities

Loeb solved the problem, but rather unsatisfactorily to Mrs. Young. He recommended, and the board adopted a plan, to print their own spellers. This meant extra work for the superintendent because she had to take primary responsibility for writing the new spellers.<sup>73</sup>

Rothmann continued his hostility to her. He pestered her seeking favors, but she always refused. He would arrive just when she was leaving for the day and hold her up. He wanted her to demote certain CTF teachers, but she refused these requests also.<sup>74</sup>

In June Mayor Harrison wrote her another letter of support, to squelch any new rumors, especially after the Plunkett episode.<sup>75</sup> It helped, and so did the fact that the new board President, Peter Reinberg, supported her; but hostility from other board members persisted. Loeb was becoming a cohort of Rothmann's in his bullying tactics.<sup>76</sup>

June and July were hectic for her. On June 27, under Governor Dunne, former Chicago mayor, the Illinois women got the franchise.<sup>77</sup> An article in the Chicago Record Herald even pictured her with Jane Addams and Julia Lathrop — a social reformer. The caption read "Three Reasons Why Ill. Women Won the Vote First,"<sup>78</sup> but it was little comfort to the problems she faced.<sup>79</sup> By the end of July she had made up her mind to resign.<sup>80</sup>

## Her Resignation

She submitted the following letter of resignation to the President of the board:

Mr Dear Sir -

In December my term of office as Superintendent of Schools will be due to expire. All important details of the school year 1912-1913 will be completed by August 13. Soon after the middle of August a superintendent enters upon the work incident to opening the schools for the new year beginning in September.

If the change of superintendents be made in August instead of December, my successor in the office will have opportunity to plan and arrange for the next school year in its entirety; and on the other hand, I shall be relieved from laboring under that handicap of indefiniteness which influences a person in making plans to be executed by another almost from their inception. I therefore resign herewith the superintendency of the public schools of Chicago, the resignation to take effect August 13, 1913.

With deep appreciation of the recognition given through many years by the Board of Education to my service in the public schools of Chicago, I am,

(Signed) Respectfully yours,  
Ella Flagg Young,  
Superintendent of Schools.<sup>81</sup>

She supplemented her reasons in a newspaper report: She said that she thought that she "was the victim of political intrigue among board members." The interview quoted her as saying "that her retention of the superintendency would impair the efficiency of the schools."<sup>82</sup>

Former member of the board Dr. Cornelia DeBey told reporters that it was due to actions "of a lot of cheap politicians and the board. We women won't stand for it,"<sup>83</sup> but two other board members said they were sure that the board would accept her resignation.<sup>84</sup>

Harding, Rothmann, and Loeb made no comment. President Reinberg said he

would resign if the action was approved. Another board member, William Vincent, alluded to some of her difficulties with three of the board members. One board member [Harding?] said Vincent, "spoke unpardonably about her." "Someone [Loeb?]," he continued, "whose grammar isn't any good tried to tell Ella Flagg Young how to teach spelling. Another who pretends to be her friend has secretly and publicly antagonized her and her views." "It's too bad," said Vincent, "but its the only thing she can do to save her self-respect."<sup>85</sup>

In the next few days a delegation of women arrived at the mayor's office to enlist his help in stopping this action. The mayor wrote to the superintendent urging her to reconsider and stay as head of schools.<sup>86</sup> He apprised her of his three new board appointments. (four others were reappointed. Union was not one of them, however.) Of these three two were women: Mrs. Gertrude Britton and Mrs. Florence Vosbrink. The third was Dr. Peter Clemenson.<sup>87</sup>

On July 30 the board met to take action. Something must have made a difference — the mayors public support, the delegation of women, something at any rate. The board voted fourteen to one to retain her.<sup>88</sup> Four members were absent, one (James Dibelka) abstained and Harding voted against her. That meant that since both Rothmann and Loeb were there, they had voted to retain her.<sup>89</sup> She was encouraged and told the newspapers:

I shall abide by the action of the board of education. It will still be my aim to make the Chicago public schools the embodiment of the thought and endeavor of the board and of Chicago herself for the children. The kind words of parents and teachers have touched me deeply.<sup>90</sup>

She resumed her work with the same devotion as always. Perhaps the storm was over.

### Another Calm

In the fall more than 300,000 students entered the schools.<sup>91</sup> This was over 60,000 more than when she took up the work as school head. The building program had been efficiently carried out. There were still half-day sessions this year, but the number had been decreased considerably.<sup>92</sup> The elementary curriculum had been modified, but not all the "fads" were eliminated.<sup>93</sup> The board approved her recommendation to reinstate the teachers' councils. She said that in such a big system a superintendent was "cut off from the participation in the life of the teaching body of which they were once active, joyous members."<sup>94</sup> The councils were put into effect that fall.

Mayor Harrison reaffirmed his position with regard to Mrs. Young and the superintendency. "Her rule," he said "should be unopposed in all matters pertaining to the schools."<sup>95</sup> This included textbook selections as well. Some of the newspapers reported those special committees of the board were nearing an end.<sup>96</sup> Ella reported that she was certain that things would go well now.<sup>97</sup>

Now that women had the vote, Misses Haley and Goggin were more actively involved in drafting bills for salary schedules and tenure protection to be lobbied for downstate.<sup>98</sup> No one was giving Ella much trouble except Rothmann. He was still pestering her with threats if she did not demote certain teachers, but she gave little

credence to him.<sup>99</sup> Loeb was upsetting at times. She and a committee of supervisors, principals, and teachers had been working with him and some other board members on their speller. His attitudes were exasperating.<sup>100</sup> These seemed, however, to be her only hurdles. Harding just avoided her.

### Another Storm

On December 10 the board convened to take up the reelection of superintendent and assistant. Mrs. MacMahon moved that "Mrs. Ella Flagg Young be reelected Superintendent of Schools to succeed herself."<sup>101</sup> It was seconded. Then, carrying out what had been a well-kept secret plan, Mr. Harding nominated John D. Shoop to the position of superintendent. The vote was taken. One member was absent. Out of twenty votes, each received ten. It took eleven to elect a superintendent. Ella was shocked. She had not expected this.

I think that everyone here will bear me out in the statement that the duties of the Superintendent properly administered need all the strength and support of the Board; that a Superintendent who needs more than one ballot to be elected has not that support and I therefore withdraw my name from the ballot.<sup>102</sup>

Sinking down into her chair exhausted Mrs. Young sat dazed. Tears filled her eyes and in a trembling voice she refused the requests of friends sitting at her side to have her name reconsidered.<sup>103</sup> Dr. Clemensen said he thought it would be a great calamity for her to do that.<sup>104</sup> Mrs. Young said:

I took the action of the Board last July in good faith. I find I misunderstood that action. When one finds a mistake has been made the thing to do is to rectify it. I withdraw

my name as a candidate. Nothing could permit me allowing my name to be used for the superintendency.<sup>105</sup>

She turned in what was done of the speller, regretting that they had not had time to proofread it. Several people presented motions to defer the election for two weeks, but no action was taken.<sup>106</sup>

Harding moved they go on with the election. Mrs. Young asked to leave, since she did not see why she should be subjected to further discussion.<sup>107</sup> She went to her office and started packing. The vote was taken. Mr. Shoop received eleven votes; Mrs. Young five; four abstained.<sup>108</sup> Ella finished packing and went home. She was in shock.

She could not fathom it. Word spread quickly; reporters had been present at the meeting. Laura was kept busy answering the phone and the door. Margaret Haley, and Catharine Goggin came to see her.

A few other friends were permitted entrance by Laura, too. Then the tears began to flow. Margaret said "she cried enough tears to wash away all the sins of the world."<sup>109</sup> It must have been as painful to her as was losing her family. Actually, she had lost a family, because that is what the teachers and children of Chicago had come to mean to her.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Fifty-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1911 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1911), pp. 11-26.

<sup>2</sup>Ella Flagg Young, "The Report of the Faculty Round Tables in the Chicago Normal School, The Educational Bi-Monthly 3 (June 1909): 419-26.

<sup>3</sup>Fifty-Seventh Annual Report, pp. 85-105.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; Young to Edmund J. James, 24 September 1910, Series 2/5/3, Box 25, Ella F. Young Folder, President Edmund J. James General Correspondence, 1904-1919, University Archives, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

<sup>5</sup>Fifty-Seventh Annual Report, pp. 85-100; "School Work Begun by Nearly 250,000," Chicago Record Herald, 4 September 1912, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>6</sup>"Dislikes Language Methods of Schools," Chicago Record Herald, 27 August 1912, p. 4, col. 1; "Character Building Advanced in Schools," ibid., 10 September 1910, p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.; Fifty-Seventh Annual Report, pp. 85-90.

<sup>8</sup>"Plan Penny Lunch for Public Schools," Daily Inter-Ocean, 9 November 1910; "Penny Lunch Billow," Chicago Record Herald, 12 November 1910, p. 3, col. 2.

<sup>9</sup>"Laws Are Held as Unconstitutional," Daily Inter-Ocean, 21 June 1911, p. 7, col. 4.

<sup>10</sup>"Woman Routs Textbook Act and Ettelson," Chicago Record Herald, 15 December 1910, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>11</sup>"Dooms School Frats," ibid., 4 May 1911, p. 3, col. 4.

<sup>12</sup>"Art Institute Now Accredited by School Board," ibid., 9 June 1911, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>13</sup>"\$15,000 Budget Passed for Schools," ibid., 26 January 1911, p. 9, col. 3; "Raise Teachers Pay," ibid., 14 January 1912, p. 5, col. 2; "New Years Gift for Chicago Teachers," Daily Inter-Ocean, 31 December 1911, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>14</sup>Fifty-Seventh Annual Report, pp. 85-105. Fifty-Ninth Annual Report, pp. 101-128.

<sup>15</sup>"Dooms School Frats," Chicago Record Herald *ibid.*; Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago for the Year 1912-1913 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1913), pp. 1037-38.

<sup>16</sup>"Miss Strachan Firm for Bolt for NEA," Chicago Record Herald, 12 July 1912, p. 3, col. 1; "Miss Strachan Leads Bolt in the NEA," Daily Inter-Ocean, 12 July 1912, p. 3, col. 7.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>"Urion Resigns; McFatrish Is In; Has New Plans," Chicago Record Herald, 29 December 1910, p. 1, col. 3; "Urion Quits as Educational Head; McFatrish In," Daily Inter-Ocean, 29 December 1910, p. 1, col. 1. Proceedings of the Board for the Year 1910-1911, p. 507.

<sup>21</sup>"Beef Packers Indicted by U.S. Grand Jury on Conspiracy Charge," *ibid.*, 13 September 1910, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>22</sup>"Urion Quits ...," *ibid.*, 29 December 1910, 29 December 1910; Urion Resigns ...," Chicago Record Herald, 29 December 1910.

<sup>23</sup>"Mrs. Young Again Is Head of Schools," Daily Inter-Ocean, 15 December 1910, p. 2, col. 6.

<sup>24</sup>Fifty-Seventh Annual Report, pp. 11-26.

<sup>25</sup>Catharine Goggin to Margaret Haley, 9 February 1912, Box 41, Folder 3, Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>Carter Henry Harrison to Young, 1 July 1912, Carter H. Harrison Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>28</sup>Young to Harrison, 8 July 1912, *ibid.* His father was mayor while Ella was principal of the Skinner. He was the one that pointed to the Skinner School as being a socially cohesive school. *Supra*. p. 41.

<sup>29</sup>"Picks School Aids," Chicago Record Herald, 23 July 1912, p. 3, col. 2.

<sup>30</sup>"Names \$11,073,000 for School Needs," Daily Inter-Ocean, 24 January 1913, p. 3, col. 3, Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 339-40.



<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 315-16.

<sup>32</sup>"Dislikes Language Methods ...," Chicago Record Herald, 27 August 1912; "School Trustees Are Denounced by Mrs. Young," Daily Inter-Ocean, 20 December 1912, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>33</sup>"Mrs. Young Is Again Named Chief," *ibid.*, 12 December 1912, p. 3, col. 4; "Re-Elect Mrs. Young," Chicago Record Herald, 12 December 1912, p. 7, col. 2.

<sup>34</sup>"School Trustees Are Denounced ...," Daily Inter-Ocean, 20 December 1912.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>"Dr. John Guerin Dies," Chicago Record Herald, 3 January 1913, p. 3, col. 5; "Reinberg Made Head of the School Board," *ibid.*, 9 January 1913, p. 5, col. 4.

<sup>37</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year, 1912-1913, p. 1085-86; "Appropriation to Teachers' Pension Fund by Board of Education" (printed sheet), Box 41, Folder 6, CTF Files.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Mimeographed copy, from the minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Pension Fund 23 April 1913, pp. 18-23, Box 41, Folder 6, CTF Files.

<sup>41</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 343.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 344.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 446.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 447-452.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 448.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 449-50.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 450.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. "City Teachers Will Vote on Proposed Pension Bill," Daily Inter-Ocean, 9 April 1913, p. 1, col. 6; "Meeting of Teachers Is a Tumultuous One," Chicago Record Herald, 23 April 1913, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Mimeographed Copy from the Minutes ..., " pp. 18-21.

<sup>60</sup>"Meeting of Teachers ...," Chicago Record Herald, 23 April 1913.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 447-451.

<sup>63</sup>"Mrs. Young Averts Pension Bill Row," Daily Inter-Ocean, 1 May 1913, p. 2, col. 3.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>"Nurses Bill Passes House by 97 to 28," Daily Inter-Ocean, 11 June 1913, p. 2, col. 3; "Teachers Pension League Names Board Candidates," ibid., 3 October 1913, p. 7, col. 4.

<sup>66</sup>"Row on Textbooks," Chicago Record Herald, 23 May 1913, p. 3, col. 1; "Mrs. Young Tells of Threats Made in Textbook War," ibid., 29 May 1913, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>"Mrs. Young Is Mum on Textbook Muddle," ibid., 30 May 1913, p. 2, col. 5.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.; "Mrs. Young Arraigned before School Board," ibid., 12 June 1913, p. 3, col. 7.

<sup>71</sup>"Mrs. Young Is Mum ...," Ibid., 30 May 1913.

<sup>72</sup>"Harding Scares Mrs. Young and Gets Answers," Daily Inter-Ocean, 12 June 1913, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>73</sup>"Row on Textbooks," Chicago Record Herald, 23 May 1913; "Mrs. Young Is Mum . . .," *ibid.*, 30 May 1913; "Mrs. Young Silent on Textbook Row," Daily Inter-Ocean, 24 May 1913, p. 10, col. 7.

<sup>74</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 296; 336.

<sup>75</sup>Harrison to Young, 3 June 1913, and Young to Harrison, 5 June 1913, Carter H. Harrison Papers.

<sup>76</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 573; "Mrs. Young Arraigned . . .," Chicago Record Herald, 12 June 1913.

<sup>77</sup>"Dunne Signs Suffrage Bill," Daily Inter-Ocean, 27 June 1913, p. 2, col. 4.

<sup>78</sup>"Three Reasons Why Illinois Women Won the Vote First," Chicago Record Herald, 6 July 1913, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup>"Mrs. Young to Resign Board Members Hear," Chicago Record Herald, 24 July 1913, p. 2, col. 3. Even the newspapers anticipated that her difficulties would result in resignation. The general public was aware of her problems.

<sup>80</sup>"Mrs. Young Quits as School Head to Insure Peace," *ibid.*, 25 July 1913, p. 1, col. 3.

<sup>81</sup>Proceedings of the Board for the Year 1912-1913, p. 102.

<sup>82</sup>"Mrs. Young Quits . . .," Chicago Record Herald, 25 July 1913.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup>"Mrs. Young Quits as School Head; Politics Cause," Daily Inter-Ocean, 25 July 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>85</sup>"Mrs. Young May Reconsider Her Decision to Quit," Chicago Record Herald, 26 July 1913, p. 1, col. 7; "Mrs. Young Quits . . .," Daily Inter-Ocean, 25 July 1913.

<sup>86</sup>"Mrs. Young Will Remain as School Head," *ibid.*, 30 July 1913, p. 1, col. 3; "School Board May Act on Resignation Today," Chicago Record Herald, 30 July 1913, p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup>"Mrs. Young Will Remain as School Head," *ibid.*, 31 July 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., "Mrs. Young to Stay as Head of Schools," Daily Inter-Ocean, 31 July 1913, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>"Chicago Schools Will Open Today," *ibid.*, 2 September 1913, p. 3, col. 7; "310,000 End Vacation; School Begins Today," Chicago Record Herald, 2 September 1913, p. 1, col. 6. The Herald reported 310,000 students while the Inter-Ocean estimated that 300,000 would start that fall.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., "Seven New Schools Urged to House Half-Day Pupils," Daily Inter-Ocean, 12 September 1913, p. 1, col. 3; Fifty-Ninth Annual Report, pp. 11-26; 101-128.

<sup>93</sup>"310,000 End Vacation ...," Chicago Record Herald, 2 September 1913.

<sup>94</sup>Fifty-Ninth Annual Report, p. 122.

<sup>95</sup>"Mrs. Young Is Boss," Chicago Record Herald, 6 September 1913, p. 5, col. 2; "Mrs. Young Rules School Says Mayor," Daily Inter-Ocean, 6 September 1913, p. 12, col. 3.

<sup>96</sup>"Mrs. Young Is Boss," Chicago Record Herald, 6 September 1913; Committee Near End," *ibid.*, 17 September 1913, p. 3, col. 3; "School Commercial Body May Disband," Daily Inter-Ocean, 18 September 1913, p. 10, col. 5.

<sup>97</sup>"Mrs. Young Is Boss," Chicago Record Herald, 6 September 1913.

<sup>98</sup>"Teacher in Politics," *ibid.*, 14 September 1913, p. 3, col. 5.

<sup>99</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 296.

<sup>100</sup>"Vincent Names Trustees Who Vex Mrs. Young," Daily Inter-Ocean, 28 July 1913, p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>101</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1913-1914, pp. 573-74.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 573.

<sup>103</sup>"Mrs. Young Acts as School Head ...," Daily Inter-Ocean, 11 December 1913.

<sup>104</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1913-1914, pp. 573-74.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>"Ella F. Young Is Compelled to Quit Office," Chicago Record Herald, 11 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.; Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1913-1914, p. 573.

<sup>109</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 17.

## CHAPTER 12

## AN UNEASY RECONCILIATION

In order to better understand the next series of events in Ella's life, as well as those that have just preceded, a word about the school board and its relationship to politics is appropriate. Members of the board were appointed by the mayor and approved by city council.<sup>1</sup> It was always good strategy to appoint a representation of the various ethnic, labor and business interests of the city.<sup>2</sup> This was not the easiest accomplishment, nor did it enhance the board's smoothness of operation. Chicago's 2,388,500 population particularly encompassed German, Bohemian, Irish, Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, big business, small business and labor.<sup>3</sup> Women, too, were insisting on a voice in decision making. It was not a cohesive group, but instead frictions and suspicions existed among them.<sup>4</sup> The board appointments also represented a wide range of educational backgrounds. Sometimes personal biases concerning board members' own educational experiences intervened in school board policy. Then, too, motivations for accepting the appointment varied. The valuable school lands intrigued some realtors; pension funds interested other people; a budget of over \$10,000,000. annually represented a chance for power to some. The rationals for personal gain were endless.<sup>5</sup>

There were many spirited and right-minded people who served on the boards and served well. It took only a few of the petty, more mundane motivations to destroy a harmonious operation. The appointees were choices of the mayor, usually after he had consulted the wishes

of the group to be represented. He could often intercede in times of discord (as Harrison did with Ella), and peace would usually prevail. This was true as long as the mayor's authority was backed by public sentiment. However, when his popularity was dwindling his intervention was less effective. The mayor could not remove any board member without resignations. If his political strength waned, the pettiness of power struggles would creep back into the educational decision-making process. In the past, teachers, administrators and superintendents had become the victims of such struggles. It had just occurred again.

#### A Mayor's Consternation

Mayor Harrison was quite upset with his board. He had publicly pledged Mrs. Young his full support, and he expected the board to honor that pledge. He had asked them to conduct an open ballot election, and they had even managed to ignore that request.<sup>6</sup> When he had talked with Superintendent Young during the summer, he had found out some things that did not set too well with him. Mrs. Young told him how Rothmann, then Loeb, had badgered her about demoting CTF teachers.<sup>7</sup> In fact, their demands had reached ridiculous proportions. She related one representative episode to him.<sup>8</sup>

On the day of the last meeting of the school Management Committee (June 1913), she (Mrs. Young) was in her office on the eighth floor going over the reports to see that they were signed. She had been delayed and the committee was waiting for her to bring the reports to their meeting on the sixth floor. She was momentarily conscious of

someone standing beside her, but she continued preparing materials for the committee's attention. Then she saw on her desk a note from Rothmann asking her to withdraw the name of one of the teachers whom she was recommending for promotion — because the teacher had written a letter of support for the teachers' pension bill to a state legislator. The note had been put on her desk by whomever had briefly entered her office.<sup>9</sup>

Mrs. Young decided she would bring this before the committee. She put the note with her other material, finished her work and left for the meeting. When she got to the appropriate moment to discuss the note from Rothmann she explained its content and then turned to produce it. It was missing.

Neither consternation nor terror expressed the feeling that came over her when she realized that the note was gone. She and her assistant returned to her office to search for it, but it was not to be found. She asked her assistant who had entered her office earlier. Her assistant said, "Jacob Loeb" and darted back to the meeting to ask Loeb for the papers. He took them out of his pocket and handed them over. When Mrs. Young asked him why he did not explain what he had done when she first missed them he replied, "We Jews have one-idea minds, we think of only one thing at a time." He continued, "I was thinking of something else when you asked about those papers."<sup>10</sup> After Mrs. Young had read the note, he put it back in his pocket. He was careful to leave no concrete evidence for future reference.

These episodes had become more and more frequent the superintendent told the mayor. After his pledge of support the situation had improved.



Harding (representing labor) was still hostile but not openly so; and the mayor thought that Loeb (the Jewish representation) and Rothmann (serving political party interests) had stopped most of their bullying tactics.<sup>11</sup>

After the activities of December 10, however, it was obvious that the move to oust Mrs. Young had just become more secretive -- it had not really stopped at all. Mrs. Britton, one of Mrs. Young's board supporters, told Mayor Harrison that she had gotten wind of the move to oust her a few minutes before the December 10 board convened. There was no time to really plan a retaliating move.<sup>12</sup> On December 11 Harrison stated publicly that he regretted seeing Mrs. Young leave the schools in such a manner.

I am sorry that men I appointed should resort to what I consider underhand methods to bring about an action that they knew was contrary to the wishes of the administration.

If I had believed that such a move was contemplated I could have stopped it and would have stopped it. It puts me in an extremely embarrassing position to think that my appointees should ignore my wishes in this matter.

In all my political fights I have never resorted to underhanded methods and I do not hesitate to say that I feel deeply disappointed that any appointees of mine should have done so.<sup>13</sup>

A delegation of women led by Mrs. George Bass, President of the Women's Club, and Miss Jane Addams visited the mayor. During the conference they expressed shock at such a disreputable act and told him of their plans for a mass protest meeting to be scheduled December 13. The mayor said that before he had appointed five of the current members, he had asked for updated letters of resignation from them to be used, if necessary, at his discretion. This may have been a result

of Busse's difficulties in trying to unseat the Dunne appointees. At any rate, Harrison told the women he was now going to accept these five and push for the resignations of others who had been antagonistic to Mrs. Young.<sup>14</sup> He held letters from John Harding, Charles Sethness, Harry Lipsky, James Dibelka, and Henry Huttman. "I wrote personally to each member and requested Mrs. Young's reelection," he said; "This is the one thing in my administration that has, to use the language of the streets, 'got my goat.'" <sup>15</sup>

In such circumstances it was incumbent on Mr. Shoop to resign, Harrison told the ladies. He believed it would be legally impossible to reinstate Mrs. Young without this. The women planned to work towards this end. Shoop, himself, refused to comment on the mayor's advice to the women.<sup>16</sup>

Ella remained at home in seclusion during most of the eleventh. Several board members tried to see her but failed. She received dozens of telegrams and special delivery letters. Two superintendency offers came — one from Milwaukee and the other from Washington, D.C. Later in the day she granted an interview:

As I see it what the women want to do is impossible. Under the pension law with which I am familiar it's impossible to remove Mr. Shoop. He is legally elected and it would, therefore, be impossible to remove him from a higher position to a lower position without a trial for just cause, since his term of service entitles him to the benefits of the pension law. Since he has been in office only a while it will be impossible for him to do anything in so short a time to merit trial or reduction in rank.<sup>17</sup>

"Mr. Shoop has been waiting for that position for three years," she added. "He was never in harmony with me or my policies."<sup>18</sup> When asked about her future she said "I have accepted a position to take

care of the educational department of the Chicago Tribune." To the question of whether she expected the board's action she answered, "On the contrary, I was never so astonished in all my life."<sup>19</sup>

The five deposed board members made little comment except to say that they would probably bring legal action against the mayor in order to be reinstated. They generally concurred in the feeling that the action was unjust.<sup>20</sup> Harding and Sonstebly — both labor representatives — expressed the most hostility to Mrs. Young, accusing her of playing politics and being a poor loser.<sup>21</sup>

#### A City's Protest

Meetings all over the city were planned and held. The executive committee of the Socialist party adopted resolutions favoring Mrs. Young's speedy return.<sup>22</sup> Similar resolutions were adopted by the Chicago Political Equality League, the Woman's Association of Commerce of Chicago, Woman's Trade Union League, and the Sunday Evening Club.<sup>23</sup> At the latter meeting both Mrs. Britton and Miss Cornelia DeBey made statements attesting to the fact that a plot to oust the superintendent was underway before the board meeting of December 10. Mrs. Britton mentioned seeing Miss DeBey in the board room offices prior to the meeting. Miss DeBey told her that she had received word of the plot on good authority, and she had just told the board president. Miss DeBey wrote the Inter-Ocean as follows:

"After leaving President Reinberg's office, I went direct to Mr. Shoop's office and gave him my information. I said: 'Mr. Shoop, you have the chance of your life. Do you believe that Mrs. Young is a better educator than you?' He replied:

'I do.' 'Well, they are going to elect you this afternoon as superintendent of schools. Either Mr. Sethness or Mr. Harding will nominate you. Take my advice and show your good judgment and common sense by refusing to stand and be made a tool.'

"He replied: 'You don't think I could fill the office?' 'No, I do not,' I replied. 'Well, you don't give a man a show,' he said. 'I do.' I told him, 'that is why I am coming to you now. You may depend upon it, you will never be retained any length of time. Only as you take orders will you last. Keep what you have, play fair and be a man.'

"His reply was: 'I won't do it. I know nothing.' 'Yes, you do know. I can tell by your manner that you know, and even so, you know now. What I tell you is the absolute truth. Mr. Sethness or Mr. Harding will nominate you and give you the chance of your life to show that you care for the schools and are an honorable man.'

"This is the substance and exact statement of what I said to Mr. John Shoop on Wednesday last."

CORNELIA DE BEY<sup>24</sup>

The Lieutenant Governor of Illinois suggested that the city's children strike the schools as a form of protest. The teachers in the Lucy Flower Technical School joined the Chicago Political Equality League saying that the resignation of Mrs. Young made suffragists out of them. The president of the Cook County Woman's Party suggested that a procession of mothers, fathers, and children be planned as a protest. Margaret Haley said that she was going to offer a resolution to the governor and the legislature which would take the school board out of the hands of politicians and make the offices elective.<sup>25</sup> Miss Haley told reporters that some board members wanted Mrs. Young to punish certain CTF teachers, and she had refused time and again. Mrs. Young verified this statement.<sup>26</sup>

By far the biggest protest meeting to be held was the one to which Mrs. Bass referred at the mayor's office. It was held during the day on Saturday, December 13 at the Auditorium Theatre. Organized and conducted by Mrs. Bass, it was attended by 2000 parents, teachers, and leading citizens.<sup>27</sup> The speakers included Miss Harriet Vittum, president of the Women's City Club, Mrs. Harriet Taylor Treadwell, president of the Political Equality League, Mrs. John MacMahon, Mrs. Young's friend and staunch supporter on the school board, Alderman J. H. Lawley, Professor George H. Mead, former University of Chicago colleague, Miss Jane Addams and Miss Margaret Haley.<sup>28</sup> Mrs. Bass also read a letter from the mayor which reiterated his support and his actions in removing the five board members. After all speakers were given five minutes each, in which to present their views of support for Mrs. Young and condemnation for the board's actions, Mrs. Bass presented resolutions, prepared by the planning committee and to be voted upon by the membership.<sup>29</sup> The first resolution called for the resignation of John D. Shoop. It said that since he was accused of being part of the secret ballot plot to oust Mrs. Young, his resignation would be the only way to clear his name.<sup>30</sup> After the resolution was read John Harding appeared asking to speak. Amidst hoots, hisses, and jeers, he demanded that he had a right to speak. He was given three minutes in which he stated that there was nothing wrong with what the board did. He said that during the Dunne administration, several of the members got together and agreed not to vote for anyone in order to prohibit the reelection of Cooley. One of the members who had previously agreed to do this, changed his mind at the last minute so that Cooley received his necessary

eleven votes. Harding's point was that there was a precedent for part of the board to meet in secret and agree on actions prior to board meetings. When Harding's three minutes were up, two minutes were given to Alderman Lawley who said that the city council supported the resolution. The vote was called, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.<sup>31</sup>

The second resolution also carried unanimously; it called for the mayor to restore Mrs. Young.<sup>32</sup> The third called for the ousting of William Rothmann and John Sonsteby. Some expressed concern of the inclusion of Sonsteby. Miss Haley rose and stated that she knew he had harrassed Mrs. Young as much as Harding or Rothmann had done. This was the first time such information had been exposed. Many were reluctant to cast Sonsteby with Rothmann without more evidence, but the resolution was approved anyway.<sup>33</sup> Sonsteby's roll in this was never made clear by either Miss Haley, Mrs. Young, or the newspapers. (The Herald did make some allusion to his unsuccessfully pressuring her to recommend raises for the manual training teachers.<sup>34</sup>) Both Rothmann and Sonsteby had criticized her, and Sonsteby admitted voting against her. Loeb, however, decided not to openly oppose Mayor Harrison or the superintendent. He assumed a position of supporting her throughout this fight, but he would later turn out to be more trouble to her and the teachers than Sonsteby was.<sup>35</sup>

One other protest meeting that deserves mention was called by leading and prominent men of the city. They voted to join the women in calling for the restoration of Mrs. Young. This was taken by the Inter-Ocean to be an indication that the city as a whole were united in this endeavor.<sup>36</sup>

The mayor and the women's delegation followed through with their plans. The mayor set about looking for new members. He found the following four: John Metz, president of the Carpenters' District Council, to replace Harding; John Eckhart, flour merchant, to succeed Huttman; Joseph Holpuch, a building contractor to fill Dibelka's appointment; and Axel Strom, businessman, to replace Sethness. Lipsky's resignation was not accepted after he pledged to support Mrs. Young.<sup>37</sup>

In the meantime the delegation of women called on Mr. Shoop to request his resignation. He met with the group and listened to them but said that it was not his decision to make; it was the board's.<sup>36</sup> Thus, he said that he did not have plans to resign. Richard Folsom, school counsel, said that the board did not need his resignation to legally proceed for two reasons: first, the board can always legally reconsider a secret ballot vote; and second, the December 10 action was illegal because no time limit was put on Shoop's term in office.<sup>38</sup>

By Friday, December 20, Christmas vacation was starting; Mrs. Young and Miss Brayton headed south for a two week vacation in Tryon, North Carolina. The newspapers were portraying Mr. Shoop as a poor innocent victim in this whole affair, and the new school board was preparing to meet that next Tuesday.<sup>39</sup>

#### A New School Board Acts

With Counselor Richard Folsom as advisor President Reinberg called the meeting to order at 2:30 in the afternoon two days before Christmas. The four ousted members were not seated. Both Sonstebly and Rothmann

tried to have their names read into the roll call, but they failed. They were read into the minutes as being present, however.<sup>40</sup> There ensued a good bit of commotion as to how to correctly proceed. Finally, the new members were officially seated and the roll was called for them. Twenty members were present. Daniel Cameron was the only one absent. The following excerpts from an Inter-Ocean report gives a good idea of the tone of the meeting:

"I demand to be recorded as present," shouted Mr. Harding.

He was followed in quick succession by like demands from Mr. Huttman, Mr. Sethness and Mr. Dibelka.

"I make a point of order," said Mr. Sonsteby, looking at a sheet of paper in his hand.

"I'm still a member of this board," called Mr. Sethness.

"I desire to ask if this is an adjourned meeting," said Mr. Sonsteby. "I want to ask Mr. Shoop if he has accepted the superintendency of schools."

Mr. Loeb rose to make a point of order.

"I have the floor," said Mr. Sonsteby.

"Yes, and don't give it up," shouted Mr. Harding ....

The president was busy pounding with his gavel, which he reduced to splinters in a few minutes, but without bringing order ....

The voice of the secretary droned slowly and was heard at intervals.

"Oh, Mr. President, you've got to recognize me, I say," shouted Mr. Sonsteby.

Mr. Sonsteby moved into the center aisle, and shaking his finger under the secretary's nose, demanded that he "shut up."

"You've been a friend of mine, but you dare to insult me — a member of this board — in this way, and I'll prefer charges against you before the Civil Service Commission." The



secretary's voice continued in droning tones. [The secretary was reading a letter from the city clerk stating that the four new members were legally qualified.]

The secretary finished reading the letter. On a vote to accept it, the four ousted men demanded to cast ballots. The president ruled against them ....

Mr. Harding, furious with anger, rushed from his seat to the president's desk and stuttered a demand to be heard ....

"I want to tell you, Peter Reinberg and Lewis Larson, that the people of Chicago are awake as they never were before and they won't stand for what you are doing here. Mayor Harrison has been carried away by a bunch of women who he thinks represent Chicago."

The president sat still in his seat, permitting Mr. Harding to continue. In the hallway stood several husky policemen, but no move was made to call them into the room to quell the disturbance.

Mrs. McMahon arose in her seat and the president recognized her.

This created a furore of excitement among the Sonsteby-Rothmann crowd, all of whom were on their feet yelling for recognition ....

Mr. Harding got to his feet to yell that Mr. Loeb was admirably fitted to be president of a monkeys' club.

"Mrs. McMahon has the floor," said the president as he pecked on the table with a piece of gavel ....

"Mr. President, I move you ----" began Mrs. McMahon.

"Oh, no," shouted Mr. Rothmann.

"that we reconsider the vote ----" continued Mrs. McMahon.

"I rise to a question of personal privilege," said Mr. Sonsteby.

"I want to be heard," said Mr. Harding.

"Me, too," said Mr. Sethness.

"---- by which we elected ----" said Mrs. McMahon.

"I object, I object," said Mr. Sonsteby.

"Point of order, Mr. President," shouted Mr. Harding.

"---- a superintendent two weeks ago," finished Mrs. McMahon  
....

[More shouting and interjections followed, during the roll call which resulted in reconsideration and Mrs. Young's re-election. The motion to reelect her was made by Loeb and seconded by Smietanka.]

Up to the last minute of the session the tumult and noise continued. The secretary was threatened with a dozen dire consequences for persisting in calling the roll while either Mr. Sonsteby, Mr. Rothmann or one of the ousted members tried to make a speech ....

Mr. Sonsteby charged Mr. Loeb and Mr. Lipsky with going back on their word and having agreed to vote for Mr. Shoop.

"It is no use of answering a liar," said Mr. Loeb ....

Amid hoots and shouts of "steam roller" the board adjourned ....<sup>41</sup>

The final vote was thirteen for Mrs. Young. Four members refused to vote, and three were excused from voting.<sup>42</sup> President Reinberg proudly announced that Mrs. Young was elected. The vote for Shoop for first assistant resulted in the same count as that for superintendent.<sup>43</sup>

Mrs. Young was not available for a reply. The newspapers tried calling Tryon that evening but Miss Brayton said, "Mrs. Young has no statement to make tonight." Reinberg said that he could speak for her and that she would accept.<sup>44</sup> The following day Mrs. Bass and Misses Vittum and Goggin sent Miss Brayton the following telegram: "Situation demands your presence here at once. Leave Tryon 11:50 Thursday morning without fail. Wire Miss Goggin."<sup>45</sup> The telegram became necessary because many were wondering about her personal reaction. After the friction created by the four ousted members, some were conjecturing that she would not accept. Shoop was refusing

to comment one way or another until he heard directly from Mrs. Young.<sup>46</sup>

Ella was in a bad position. On the train trip back she must have pondered her decision. Public appeal had put her back in office, but it had created strong hostilities among certain factions represented on the board. There would be no more of that unanimous support that she had enjoyed in her first years under the board. Earlier she had maintained that such support was crucial to effective leadership, and now she was operating with a forced majority supporting her.<sup>47</sup> It would be different indeed, but she thought that she could still do some good — be somewhat effective. Shoop was not a leader; under his superintendency, she knew that board factions would fight for unlimited control of the schools.<sup>48</sup> Whenever she looked at it this way she concluded that her decision to return was the right one, but there were other ways to view it. There were some who called her a sentimentalist, or thought that she was just playing politics.<sup>49</sup> That was not true. Her first big mistake over the last year or so had been in thinking that she could maintain that original cohesiveness, that by putting up with the Rothamns, Hardings and Loeb's she could accomplish this. When that had not worked, she had been forced to air the heckling and then resign. Then, when the mayor stepped in, she assumed his control was real, and she closed her eyes to the undercurrent of resentment. That was her second error in judgment; that was why the December meeting shocked and hurt her so much. She had great affection for her schools but she was not a sentimental fool. She was a realist and a pragmatist; she would never make mistakes like that again.<sup>50</sup>

Ella and Laura reached Chicago on the twenty-sixth and, according to the Record Herald, Laura called that paper to say that Mrs. Young was ready to make a statement. The following telephone interview was reported the next morning:

[Mrs. Young:] "I called up President Reinberg of the board of education tonight, told him I was back and was ready to resume work. I guess that's all, except that I'm going to resume tomorrow morning." ...

[Record Herald:] "There has been conjecture as to whether you will accept the position in the face of the disturbance the so-called 'ousted' members of the board of education threaten; will you state your position regarding that?" ...

[Mrs. Young:] "Well, I have just returned .... A man asked me if I would accept and I said I would. I have been misquoted. I never said I would require unanimous support of the board before I would accept. I told Mr. Reinberg I would accept office if I was elected. They elected me ....

[Record Herald:] "By the way, Mrs. Young, ... when will you resume, tomorrow morning?

[Mrs. Young:] "Why, yes. I guess there's lots to do. I might as well start it at once. I think I'll be there in the morning ....

[Record Herald:] "Do you look for any friction in the office by reason of the unique or embarrassing position of Mr. Shoop?

[Mrs. Young:] "No. I don't look for any friction anywhere. Good-by," she said, and hung up the receiver.<sup>48</sup>

Shoop also accepted his old post and school administration began functioning just in time to see the schools open after the holiday break. Through a series of legal appeals, the ousted members were finally reinstated by May 1914. Their original terms, however, expired shortly after they were reelected.<sup>51</sup>

## A Superintendency Resumed

The time from January 1914 to December 1915 moved along without the personal struggles of the previous year but also without the triumphs and unity of the early two years under the first school board that unanimously elected her and then returned her twice. It was at best an uneasy alliance even though she would be reelected in December 1914 by a 14 majority vote.<sup>52</sup> The same board members who had refused to vote for her return smoldered and Dr. Clemensen, who had never been very favorable, was adding his name to the opposition ranks. Mrs. Young's opponents on the board resented the restraint placed upon them by the mayor, and they blamed his long arm of control and the CTF for her reelection.<sup>53</sup> Loeb voted for Mrs. Young and publicly supported her, but he resented the CTF's power, too. As long as Mrs. Young remained in office, he was somewhat careful in his overt activities, but when the approach of her retirement became fairly obvious, so did his motives.<sup>54</sup>

Superintendent Young kept busy her last two years in office, and she brought what power she had to the support of the teachers and children of the city. From about January to April the papers were full of opinions answering the question "What is wrong with the schools."<sup>55</sup> For the most part the opinions were very critical, often calling for a return to the "three R's." Mrs. Young diplomatically ran an open invitation to the public to visit the schools.<sup>56</sup> In the elementary grades she consolidated the course of study to center around traditional three R areas, but the manual arts work was not

really slighted. She was pleased when the board approved the course.<sup>57</sup> Nationally, vocational education was becoming a major concern. Former superintendent Cooley had authored a bill providing for a dual system of education similar to Germany's, with the technical track housed in separate, special trade schools. Mrs. Young was very outspoken against the Cooley bill and spent time in Springfield advocating an approach which would put the technical track into the common high school.<sup>58</sup>

During the summer of 1914 Mrs. Young, Mrs. Britton, and Miss Brayton prepared for a trip abroad to see what was happening in the European systems. They could not guess, when they left home, how war-like all of Europe would be when they arrived.<sup>59</sup> The hostilities between Austria and Serbia had erupted before they left, and Germany and Russia were waiting in the wings. By the time they arrived, however, France was involved and England's declaration of war was imminent.<sup>60</sup>

They travelled through the war zone into Denmark, but Denmark was mobilizing, so they did not see any schools. In Sweden Ella was told (by the spouse of a Chicago school teacher) that they should get to Bergen, Norway as fast as possible. They followed his advice. In Bergen they booked passage on a "tramper" that reluctantly dropped them at Ireland on its way to Iceland.<sup>61</sup> Enroute to Ireland they were told that the waters were mined. They passed some ships thought to be German which gave everyone a scare. Relief set in when it was discovered that they were British. Forty-eight hours later they reached Ireland, fifteen minutes after they landed, Britain banned everyone but British citizens from disembarking.<sup>62</sup> They felt very lucky. From

London they booked passage on a ship home. They had an escort through dangerous areas. Chicago had never looked so good. Weary but happy, they were glad to be home.<sup>63</sup>

Unfortunately, they had seen nothing of schooling, but the new information gained would not have helped for the next difficulties anyway. A financial crisis was in the making — one that would lend fuel to the smoldering anti-CTF forces on the board. Mrs. Young was about to be accused of poor financial managing. The changes sprang from several motives — to embarrass the superintendent, to make an excuse for reducing teachers' salaries, and to distract attention from the inept operations of the board. There were also rumors that one or two board members were guilty of misusing their positions.

In January 1914 a daily newspaper alleged in a series of news articles that a coterie of men had made unreasonable profits on sales of school sites to the board. Supposedly, these were made possible by advance information. There were charges of conspiracy to defraud.<sup>64</sup> The people who were charged were exonerated in May, but several board members feared looking bad. Lipsky was a friend of one of the people involved, and Loeb was in the real estate business.<sup>65</sup>

During this time Mrs. Young recommended a five percent salary increase for the teachers. Whether some of the board members hoped to look better to the newspapers or whether they were looking for a scapegoat for the future deficit is unknown. At any rate they approved the increase, and the teachers were encouraged.<sup>66</sup> Mrs. Young was also encouraged, but Sonstebly tried to needle her about it.<sup>67</sup> He said that the teachers settled for the five percent and accepted many of her

recommendations only because they feared her. Her voice shaking with anger, she walked over to him and said, "I will have you know that I am not a terror to the teachers of this town!" "There, there," was all Sonsteby could say, and the matter was dropped.<sup>68</sup>

Between the newspaper criticisms, of the schools, the charges of graft (and, it was widely said, a whitewash cover up on the school-site scandal), and the court action of the four ousted members (which resulted in their being reseated in May), most board members were not attending regularly. When there was a quorum to do business, the meeting was rushed through to adjournment.<sup>69</sup>

By fall 1914 there was clearly a deficit, but no one seemed to be able to agree on how much. Estimates ranged from \$600,000 to \$1,262,810.<sup>70</sup> In this case the budget was the boards', not the superintendent's. It had been developed haphazardly, without serious attention to whether adequate funds were available. The board had even hired a consulting firm to develop a "scientific" budget and then ignored the suggestions. Now the board was failing to do anything about the deficit. In January 1915 Mrs. Young announced to the teachers that according to her figures there was a \$600,000 deficit. She said the teachers would have to work two weeks without pay.<sup>71</sup> She hoped the warning would be early enough for the CTF to work to secure more revenue. She was really sounding a public alarm.<sup>72</sup> Margaret Haley understood the message, and by May had secured (through passage of the Juul Law) a larger portion of the mill levy. Land revaluations and the provisions of this law increased revenue to about \$2,500,000.<sup>73</sup>



By May, however, other things had changed. Mayor Harrison had been defeated in the primary and William Thompson was elected. Thompson publicly stated that he would not involve himself in school affairs. It was Dunne's, Busse's and Harrison's undoing, he said.<sup>74</sup> Also, Michael J. Collins had been elected board president. He was a rather weak chairman. This allowed Jacob Loeb to gain control, which he did by buying his way into the vice presidency.<sup>75</sup> He had offered Mr. Sethness his personal check for \$2000 to defray the legal expenses of the four ousted members on the condition that they vote for him for vice president. They kept their bargain and elected him during the brief period after their restorations before their terms expired. In December 1915 he became president. Clemenson had wanted the presidency and when he lost to Loeb, he revealed his opponents tactics. He also said that Loeb hated the CTF and Miss Haley and Mrs. Young.<sup>76</sup> Events verified his observation.

With Loeb dominating the board and a mayor who turned his back on its operation, the CTF was headed on a collision course with trouble. Loeb, first of all, insisted that to operate the schools without borrowing on the new revenue the teachers would have to work for a seven and a half percent cut in salary.<sup>77</sup> Rothmann blamed the proposed cut on Mrs. Young, saying that it was her raise of the previous year which made it necessary.<sup>78</sup> She defended herself and mentioned the two week measure that she had suggested. (The board had turned the suggestion down at the time, saying it was not necessary and, of course, Miss Haley had secured the added revenue.)

Ella had planned to resign by July 1, 1915 to go into retirement.<sup>79</sup> Now, however, she decided to remain until the deficit and threat of salary decrease was cleared. It was a normal procedure to borrow on expected tax warrants, but Loeb had refused, so she scrutinized the budget until she found other ways to trim it down so that the teachers would not suffer.<sup>80</sup> It worked. Loeb's salary cut did not go into effect.

Toward the end of August, she went on vacation, and while she was gone, the board met. Loeb was, by now, furious with the fact that the CTF had not been stripped of power and been made to give up labor tactics.<sup>81</sup> At the last board meeting in August, Loeb presented a ruling to be voted on immediately. Known as the Loeb rule, it prohibited teachers from belonging to: 1) any labor connected organization or 2) any group whose executive officers were not teaching at the present time.<sup>82</sup> The board approved it, some because of Loeb's autocratic control and others because business interests compelled it.<sup>83</sup>

When Mrs. Young returned there was little she could do. All teachers had received contracts to be signed. These complied with the new ruling and had to be signed before the first paycheck was received. Mrs. Young tried to get some recommendations for promotions approved. Loeb and the board refused approval until the contracts were signed.<sup>84</sup> CTF Attorney Greenacre secured an injunction so that by October the board was prohibited from enforcing such a ruling. Miss Haley went to work to secure a tenure protection bill in the meantime.<sup>85</sup>

Clemenson introduced a rule restricting the superintendent's power by creating a back-up committee as overseer, but the board never approved it.<sup>86</sup> Mrs. Young openly criticized both rulings to different groups to which she spoke.<sup>87</sup> Some felt she criticized the Clemenson rule because it would inhibit her more.<sup>88</sup> She denied this, however.

Despite Loeb's efforts, the financial deficit had been made up. By May the board was accused of padding the building expenses, thus producing the higher deficit figure. There were also charges, apparently true, that names of dead teachers had been put into the salary roll to make the deficit as large as possible.<sup>89</sup> It was a move to cut teachers' salaries under the guise of necessary economy, but it failed. Alderman Buck was charged by the city council with heading up an investigation of the schools.<sup>90</sup>

In October Mrs. Young announced her retirement.<sup>91</sup> Newspaper reporters clamored to her office for an interview. She knew the aspiring Mr. Shoop could hardly wait to move into the office. The Record Herald reported the interview as follows:

It was not unlike the old days in schools — days near the end of the term, when the teacher, with a class in front of her, talked of the parting which was near, asked each pupil what he planned doing, and gave a few friendly suggestions as to the manner in which their work should be done.

Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, retiring superintendent of schools, sat on one side of the long table in her office. On the other was the full staff of newspaper men assigned to the board of education. The class was trying to get a story from the superintendent on the situation in the schools precipitated by her decision not to seek reelection. The teacher was just as determined not to give it.

"SEE NEW SUPERINTENDENT"

"It is time for you young men to turn to the rising sun, and away from the setting sun," said the superintendent. "I have quit giving out interviews. The public cares little now for what I say. It wants to hear from the next superintendent."

"Do you know what I would do if I were a reporter? I would go to the candidates for this office and ask each of them to tell me, for publication in my paper, what he would do to make the Chicago schools better, if elected superintendent."

"But we cannot find one who will admit he is a candidate for the place," complained the class.

SOME MORE ADVICE

"Well," continued the superintendent, "having told you what to do, I now will tell you how to do it. I would say: 'I know you are not a candidate, that you are too big to seek the place, but your friends insist you must be a candidate, and they want you to tell the public what you would do to improve the schools.'"

"All right," chorused the class. "Tell us of some woman educator who would make a good superintendent."

"Not a name," she answered with emphasis, bringing her hand down on the table with a bang. "I am out of it. At that," she continued, after a bit, "there are a number of them as competent as any of the men."

... Then leaning back in her chair with the air of one whose work was finished, she said: "I am free. I own myself again."<sup>92</sup>

It was true. Her affection would always remain with the children and the teachers, but she was tired of the battle. She looked forward to a rest with mixed feelings of joy and sorrow.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Chicago Teacher, "The Chicago Board of Education and the Teachers' Federation," School and Society 2 (16 October 1915): 565-68.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.; Elsie May Smith, "Findings of the New Chicago School Census," Journal of Education 76 (29 August 1912): 209-10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.; Chicago Teacher, p. 566; 310,000 End Vacation; School Begins Today," Chicago Record Herald, 2 September 1913, p. 1, col. 6.

<sup>4</sup>"Many City Children Lack School Chance," *ibid.*, 6 October 1913, p. 3, col. 7; Smith, pp. 209-10; A Chicago Teacher, pp. 566-67.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, pp. 209-10.

<sup>6</sup>"Ella F. Young Is Compelled to Quit," Chicago Record Herald, 11 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7; Mrs. Young Quits as School Head; Shoop Succeeds," Daily Inter-Ocean, 11 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 296-98, Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>8</sup>"Request of a Board Member to Eliminate the Name of a Teacher Recommended for Promotion in June 1913 as Told by the Then Superintendent [sic], Ella Flagg Young," copy of a document in Box 41, Folder 6, 2 pp., CTF Files.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 296-98; "Mrs. Young Rules School Says Mayor," Chicago Record Herald, 6 September 1913, p. 12, col. 3; "Mrs. Young Is Boss," Daily Inter-Ocean, 6 September 1913, p. 5, col. 2.

<sup>12</sup>"Mrs. Young Quits ...," *ibid.*, 11 December 1913.

<sup>13</sup>Ella F. Young Is Compelled ...," Chicago Record Herald, 11 December 1913.

<sup>14</sup>"Demand Return of Ella F. Young as School's Head," *ibid.*, 12 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

- 17 "Mrs. Young Quits Fight as Friends Rally to Her Aid," Daily Inter-Ocean, 12 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.
- 18 "Mayor Ousts 5 Board Members in School Crisis," Chicago Record Herald, 13 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 "Reinberg to Aid Move to Return Mrs. E. F. Young," Daily Inter-Ocean, 15 December 1913, p. 2, col. 2.
- 22 "Demand Return of Mrs. Young ...," Chicago Record Herald, 12 December 1913.
- 23 "Mayor Ousts 5 ...," ibid., 13 December 1913.
- 24 "Reinberg to Aid Move ...," Daily Inter-Ocean, 15 December 1913.
- 25 "Demand Return of Ella F. Young ...," Chicago Record Herald, 12 December 1913.
- 26 "Mayor Ousts Five Trustees; Mrs. Young May Reconsider," Daily Inter-Ocean, 13 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.
- 27 "Ousted Trustees Write to Mayor They Will Fight," ibid., 14 December 1913, p. 1, col. 5. "Protest Raised for Mrs. Young; Harding Hissed," Chicago Record Herald, 14 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.
- 28 "Stenographic Report of the Public Mass Meeting Held at the Auditorium Theatre, Chicago, Saturday Morning, December 13, 1913," copy of a report in Box 42, October-December 1913 Folder, 47 pp., CTF Files.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., p. 30; "Reinberg to Aid Move ...," Daily Inter-Ocean, 15 December 1913.
- 31 "Stenographic Report ...," pp. 37-39.
- 32 Ibid., pp. 41-43.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 "Politics Costs Mrs. Young's Place, Avers Sonsteby," Chicago Record Herald, 15 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>35</sup>"Board Opens War on School Union," Chicago Herald, 24 August 1915, p. 12, col. 1.

<sup>36</sup>"Reinberg to Aid Move ...," Daily Inter-Ocean 15 December 1913.

<sup>37</sup>"Mayor Names Two Supporters of Mrs. Young," *ibid.*, 23 December 1913, p. 1, col. 3; "Mayor Appoints 5 New Trustees to School Board," Chicago Record Herald, 18 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>38</sup>"Mrs. Young to Be Back in Office in Week, Is Rumor," Daily Inter-Ocean, 17 December 1913, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>39</sup>"Mrs. Young Sure of 14 Votes in Tuesday Meeting," *ibid.*, 20 December 1913, p. 1, col. 3; "School Board Members to Hear Mayor's Talk," Chicago Record Herald, 20 December 1913, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>40</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago for the Year 1913-1914 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1914), pp. 581-585.

<sup>41</sup>"Mrs. E. F. Young Is Reinstated; Shoop to Fight," Daily Inter-Ocean, 24 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>42</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1913-1914, p. 585. Those voting for Mrs. Young were Sumner, Smietanka, Loeb, Collins, Peterson, Britton, MacMahon, Lipsky, Metz, Eckhart, Holpuck, Strom, and Reinberg; those excused from voting were Roulston, Kelly, and Sonstebly; those refusing to vote were Vosbrink, Clemensen, Warning, and Rothmann.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 585-86.

<sup>44</sup>"Ella F. Young Is Re-Elected to School Job," Chicago Record Herald, 24 December 1913, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>45</sup>Mrs. George Bass, Harriet Vittum, and Catharine Goggin to Laura Brayton, 24 December 1913, Box 42, October-December 1913 Folder, CTF Files.

<sup>46</sup>"Mrs. Young Accepts Her Old School Job," Chicago Record Herald, 27 December 1913, p. 2, col. 7; "Shoop Gives Way to Ella F. Young as School's Head," *ibid.*, 28 December 1913, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>47</sup>*Supra*, p. 193.

<sup>48</sup>"Shoop Gives Way ...," Chicago Record Herald, 27 December 1913; "Mayor Ousts 5 ...," *ibid.*, 13 December 1913; "Reinberg to Aid Move ...," Daily Inter-Ocean, 15 December 1913. Those who supported Shoop were those most hostile to the CTF.

<sup>49</sup>"Politics Costs Mrs. Young's Place ...," Chicago Record Herald, 15 December 1913.

<sup>50</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 17; 296-98; 314-343.

<sup>51</sup>"Mrs. Young at Old Post; Shoop Is Her Assistant," Daily Inter-Ocean, 28 December 1913, p. 3, col. 1. See "School Trustees Give in to Foell," Chicago Record Herald, 5 May 1914, p. 1, col. 5 for seating of ousted members.

<sup>52</sup>Proceedings of the Board of Education for the Year 1914-1915, p. 504.

<sup>53</sup>Albertine Raven to Margaret Haley, 29 July 1916, Box 45, Folder 3, CTF Files.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.; "Board Opens War ...," Chicago Herald, 24 August 1915; "Mrs. Young Hints She May Retire," *ibid.*, 16 October 1915, p. 3, col. 1.

<sup>55</sup>See the Chicago Record Herald daily newspaper for the months of January to April.

<sup>56</sup>"Will Point Out Deficiencies in Public Schools," *ibid.*, 5 January 1914, p. 4, col. 1.

<sup>57</sup>"Trustees Adopt Ella F. Young's Course of Study," *ibid.*, 24 March 1914, p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>58</sup>"Schools to Guide from 'Blindpath'," Chicago Herald, 7 July 1914, p. 1, col. 1; "Vocational Unit Plan Is Endorsed," *ibid.*, 31 December 1914, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>59</sup>"War Woes Told by Mrs. Young," Chicago Herald, 26 August 1914, p. 5, col. 1.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>Department of Public Instruction. City of Chicago. Sixtieth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1914 (Chicago: Board of Education, 1914), p. 15. See also daily accounts in the Chicago Record Herald and Daily Inter-Ocean for the period January to June 1914.



- 65 "School Site Purchases Will Be Investigated," Chicago Record Herald, 12 January 1914, p. 1, col. 5.
- 66 "Mrs. Young Clashes with J. J. Sonsteby," *ibid.*, 1 April 1914, p. 3, col. 4.
- 67 *Ibid.*
- 68 *Ibid.*
- 69 "School Trustees Defy Judge Foell," *ibid.*, 30 April 1914, p. 1, col. 5; "Scientific Budget to School Board," Daily Inter-Ocean, 15 April 1914, p. 5, col. 2.
- 70 "Mrs. Young May Pass the Buck Right Back," Chicago Herald, 25 February 1914, p. 9, col. 5; "Lack \$1,262,810 Cash for Running Schools," *ibid.*, 5 March 1914, p. 5, col. 2.
- 71 "Pupils May Get Extra Vacation," Chicago Herald, 19 January 1915, p. 16, col. 1.
- 72 Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, pp. 573.
- 73 "Protest of Teachers Will Be Voiced Today," Chicago Herald, 12 May 1915, p. 6, col. 1.
- 74 Raven to Haley, 29 July 1916, CTF Files.
- 75 *Ibid.*
- 76 *Ibid.*
- 77 "Crowd Protests School Pay Cut," Chicago Herald, 12 May 1915, p. 6, col. 1.
- 78 "School Blunder Causes Trouble," *ibid.*, 23 April 1915, p. 18, col. 3.
- 79 "Blames Board for School Woes," *ibid.*, 8 June 1915, p. 9, col. 1.
- 80 *Ibid.*
- 81 "Board Opens War . . .," *ibid.*, 24 August 1915.
- 82 "Federation Ruin, Boards' Object," *ibid.*, 4 September 1915, p. 16, col. 2.
- 83 Raven to Young, 29 July 1916, CTF Files.
- 84 "Federation Ruin . . .," *ibid.*, 4 September 1915.

<sup>85</sup>"Teachers Await Move by Board," *ibid.*, 24 September 1915,  
p. 4, col. 1.

<sup>86</sup>"Mrs. Young Hints ...," *ibid.*, 16 October 1915.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup>Hewitt Relates Council's Blow at School Pay Cut; *ibid.*, 18  
May 1915, p. 18, col. 1.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup>"School Head to Quit December 8," *ibid.*, 22 October 1915, p. 16,  
col. 6.

<sup>92</sup>"Mrs. Young Holds a New Class," *ibid.*, 23 October 1915, p. 16,  
col. 6.

## CHAPTER 13

## EPILOGUE

"The children of Chicago, so far as it has been their good fortune to come into any sort of personal contact with her," wrote the Chicago Herald, "know they are losing a friend indeed from among the ruling powers of their lives, because after December 8 Mrs. Ella Flagg Young will be no longer head of the public schools."<sup>1</sup> The Herald editorial continued:

About a year ago a certain small boy came home with shining eyes to tell about the lady whose acquaintance he had made while waiting at a suburban station for a train. He is a small boy, by no means humble of mind and not easily impressed with anybody's greatness. But that five-minute interview enrolled him as Mrs. Young's devoted admirer.

The incident excited curiosity, and prompted enquiry. The judgment was found to be uniform. While it isn't easy to break through the reticence of childhood, this was found a subject on which expression was prompt and decided. From scores of children who had happened to meet her — and she seemed never to overlook a child anywhere near — came the verdict: "She's all right!"<sup>2</sup>

## A Farewell

By November 1915 the city prepared to bid farewell to its foremost woman educator. Banquets and dinners were planned all over the city to honor and commemorate the more than fifty years of devoted service that she had given to Chicago. A group of eighty-eight of the most prominent members of the community — forty-two men and forty-six women — sent out invitations to her friends that they might pay tribute to that service and to the close of her superintendency.<sup>3</sup> A large banquet

was held December 1. There were seventeen speakers, including principals, university and city club members, equal suffrage and women's club representatives, and clerical and lay persons of different churches.<sup>4</sup> The speakers all stressed her service to teachers, parents, scholars, and schooling in general. Several women praised the support that she had given to the independence and rights of women. By her outstanding example she had blazed a trail for women to follow in the future.<sup>5</sup> The consensus of all the patrons that night, however, was that she had done the most for the children of Chicago. Telegrams and letters were read from U.S. Commissioner Philander P. Claxton, Superintendent William Maxwell of New York City, and A. E. Winship, Editor of the Journal of Education. When the tributes ended Mrs. Young rose and with "characteristic poise, strength and far-sightedness [she] made her rejoinder to this flood of friendly and sincere appreciation."<sup>6</sup> She said that it would not turn her head, for she well knew "that in a few years no more will be thought or said of me than has been said of my predecessors," where upon she paid tribute to each one of them all men whom she had known personally save the first superintendent, Duane Doty. She closed on a note of sensible emotion:

I shall not attempt to keep my hands on the Chicago schools. If what I have done does not remain unless I attempt to interfere, the sooner it dies the better. I believe that when a person cannot carry on his work in peace it is time to withdraw, and I am acting on that belief. Probably, the hardest time for me will be when I leave my office next week never to return.<sup>7</sup>

When the banquet was over she returned to her room in the LaSalle Hotel. Many wanted to call on her afterwards, but "good bys" were hard to say, and she wanted to be finished with them for another

evening. University of Illinois President Edmund James arrived after she had retired to her room. He sent her this note later.

I showed my estimate of your work from the academic side in the recommendation which I put up for the honorary degree which you received from the University of Illinois. You know from my own personal intercourse with you through the years that I have been a consistent admirer of you and your work. I remember you longer ago than you remember me for one of my classmates at Normal, Mrs. Bryant, formerly Amy Kellogg, used to sing your praises to me as far back as 1878 when I was teaching in the high school at Evanston.<sup>8</sup>

She spent the last week preparing to leave. She gave most of her furniture to the Mary Thompson Hospital for Children, and she gave 1000 of her books to the Chicago Public Library. She wanted little baggage to contend with during her remaining years of travel.<sup>9</sup> She and Miss Brayton had made arrangements to move, at least temporarily, to Los Angeles. Ella refused to lead a sedentary life. She intended to embark on a literary career. First she planned a book on the school systems in the country, and she had heard positive remarks about schools in Los Angeles.<sup>10</sup>

Wednesday, December 8, finally arrived. She gave her last interviews to the press in which she told them "C-H-I-C-A-G-O spells opportunity," which she said expressed her views on the coming generation of people who would live and work in Chicago. The love she had for the city was based on a long and deep knowledge of its development and growth. She had after all watched it develop through its most difficult and awkward period, from a population of under 100,000 to over 2,000,000.<sup>11</sup> In that tremendous growth she had had a hand in helping ethnic groups learn to trust each other as worthwhile Americans. In fact, it had been her greatest endeavor over the past six and a

half years to bring a practical and useful education to the children of Chicago, so that they would grow into a happy well adjusted, intelligent, and united democratic citizenry. So it was fitting that she leave on such a note of optimism for the future of Chicago.<sup>12</sup> She packed up her office and by five o'clock she and Miss Brayton were heading to the train station where they would depart for California. Hardly anyone save Mrs. George Bass, Mrs. MacMahon, and Miss Haley knew that she was leaving so quickly.<sup>13</sup>

The accolades to her career were still being written long after she was gone. To assess the impact of such a brilliant personality was difficult to do, and bouquets were still being tossed by educators, suffragists, and friends.<sup>14</sup> There were so many firsts for her as a woman: first female superintendent of a major city; first female president of the NEA; first female president of the Illinois State Teachers Association; and first female principal of a large teachers normal college. She had established many precedents for women to follow. She had always encouraged women to higher aspirations, occasionally through speeches to the various political suffrage groups, but mostly by example.<sup>15</sup> She told a group of young women in New York that they could become what they wanted to be: if they aspired to be a classroom teacher and nothing more, they would be a classroom teacher; if they aspired to be a professor, doctor or lawyer they would be a professor, doctor or lawyer. It was a natural belief to her, but it was not so comfortable to others.<sup>16</sup> She once said in an interview, "I am a suffragist, yes. But I am one who believes there is nothing more to be said on the subject. There is nothing left on which to argue.

That women have not complete suffrage" she said quite boldly, but with a hint of play, "is due to the wickedness of men."<sup>17</sup> She also expressed a loyalty to Chicago women when she said "I'd like to do for the women of Chicago what they've done for me in the past in giving me my chance."<sup>18</sup> Her educational beliefs have grown with the nation. The "fads and frills" are an integral part of the curriculum, as are the industrial and manual arts courses in the high schools. She wanted children to be happy in school, and to be happy she thought that they should have a chance to select work for which they have "ability, talent or genius."<sup>19</sup> She said, "while the first function of the schools is to train the brain and hands of children, we are finding that it can assume other functions with enormous advantage to the community and with added efficiency to the schools."<sup>20</sup> This statement is certainly descriptive of schools today, some fifty years later.

A former pupil of hers wrote an article the title of which tells much: "Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, Teacher, Woman, Friend." George H. Mead, a former colleague at the University of Chicago, called her a "great educational stateswoman."<sup>21</sup> Perhaps, the best tribute paid to her as a leader, educator, teacher and woman, during those last December days came from William B. Owen, her successor at the Normal (known in 1915 as the Chicago Teachers College):

Superintendent Ella Flagg Young has closed her active official connection with the Chicago public schools after a service covering fifty years, six years and a half of which were spent in the capacity of leader and director of the whole system .... That she was the intellectual peer of the leaders in public education in America would be readily admitted by all. Her open mind, progressive spirit, and breadth of view enabled her to inaugurate movements the value of which only subsequent years can fully reveal.

Again, Mrs. Young was an executive officer of the first rank. No one ever accused her of neglecting even the smallest detail of her official duty as she saw it. And she was not merely conscientious, she was efficient. She could get business done. Her ability to drive her work, instead of letting her work drive her, was truly unique. In this respect she was a model for all her co-workers. Her long experience in the schools, in the course of which she saw the system develop from small beginnings to metropolitan proportions, gave her a grasp on precedent and procedure that was truly comprehensive. But this experience did not lead to indecision, nor to a hesitating conservation. She saw the whole problem at a glance, came to a speedy but sure conclusion, and was ready to execute when the time for action came. Had she been a man, she would have held a foremost position in the world of affairs. She could have directed a great corporation, managed a railroad, served as governor of a state, or commanded an army. She was a born leader with an equipment that challenged comparison ...

But the fact is that the first women to break into man's world have to purchase the experience at a high cost. Mrs. Young throughout all her career had the experiences of a woman pioneer, took all the chances with clear intelligence, asked no favors because of her sex, bravely accepted the rules of the new game, and played it out to the end with a courage and equanimity that compels the admiration of all. As she herself has said, the good that she has done will survive and the rest should and will perish. All who have served with her in the work of public education in Chicago have had the stimulus of contact with a great personality.<sup>22</sup>

In Los Angeles Ella worked on her book and visited the city's schools for which she had nothing but praise. She wrote glowingly of the work Superintendent J. N. Francis was doing there. "In Los Angeles," she wrote, "I see that Superintendent Francis has taken for the basis of his work the fact that play is the foundation for the child's activities." She stated that "if the city schools were to stand still for ten years, they would still lead the American public school system."<sup>23</sup>

She involved herself with the Patrons Department of the NEA which was attempting to organize the women into "fostering nationwide plans



for educational advance."<sup>24</sup> (Presumably the "advance" was compatible with her educational beliefs.) There is no evidence, however, that she ever finished the book she had thought she would write.<sup>25</sup>

She kept abreast of educational activities in Chicago, including neighborhood growth and changes and the expansion to include new districts. When Catharine Goggin was killed by the auto on January 4, 1916, she wrote a warm tribute to her for the Chicago Tribune:

"More than forty years ago Catharine Goggin entered the Chicago Normal School on the West side. I was at that time principal of the practice school .... She was reserved and studious, but was ever on the alert to know why certain customs in school management were favored. After entering upon the work of teaching her mind was equally on the alert to know why teachers were controlled by certain customs that to her seemed unjust. In the course of time she became more deeply interested in the defense of the rights of teachers than in the special act of teaching.

Her mind was of the legal type - her interests like those of a missionary were bound up in one great cause, the regrets of teachers in the pursuance of their profession. Whenever the question of teachers' rights loomed on the horizon, she sought instinctively for the foundations on which those sights rested - foundations which had been recognized in the legally constituted courts and in the tribunals of social justice.

The teachers have lost a friend whose devotion to secure their rights was fearless.<sup>26</sup>

She visited Chicago in July 1916 and fall 1917 but the newspapers never knew she was there. She was true to her word; to a remarkable degree she stayed out of educational affairs. Alderman Robert Buck, who headed up the city council investigation wrote to her regarding possible testimony that she could give, but she declined saying that she had kept up with the hearings and there was nothing she could add. The teachers were having a difficult time with Jacob Loeb, who was now

president of the board, and John Shoop, who was superintendent, and she sympathized with their plight. The Loeb rule had not worked due to the injunction first and then to a court ruling making it illegal, so Loeb with consent of the board had refused to issue contracts to sixty-eight teachers for the year 1916-1917. Thirty-eight of them were CTF members.<sup>27</sup> She was not surprised, however. She had warned both Mrs. MacMahon and Margaret before she left that something like this would occur.<sup>28</sup>

She presented a paper at the NEA meeting in July 1916. Who should precede her but Jacob Loeb, defending his stand against teachers' unions. When she heard this she discarded her prepared speech and answered his criticisms. She said "no person should ever be on a board of education who does not send his own children, or did not send them while they were of school age, to the public schools." Loeb's children attended private schools. She gave a defense of the CTF.

In Chicago — I might as well say Chicago outright; you know that what has been said referred to Chicago — as a district superintendent I saw the beginnings of the Chicago Teachers' Federation, and I felt very uneasy; I feared those teachers were becoming too grasping — else why were they organizing the federation, independent of the superintendent and the board of education? I was not large enough in the beginning to see, I had not the insight to see, that these women were realizing that they had not the freedom, the power, which people should have who are to train the minds of children. They came into the committee (I used to attend the meetings of the Committee on School-Management when I was a district superintendent), and asked that the board consider increasing their salaries. I can see that committee now, as they sat there and listened calmly, with immovable, expressionless faces. When all had spoken, the chairman asked whether there were any more to speak. There were no more; hence they were dismissed; and then the smile that went around that table! They had had their say. I don't know whether you take that situation in fully or not. The result was — nothing! And again they came, and the same courteous reception

and the same dismissal and the same nothing! And after a while they said, "This is silly."

When they were affiliated with the Labor Union I was sorry. I thought they had made a great mistake, and I said publicly that I thought it was a mistake, and on general principles I would be willing to make that statement today. But what affected my general principles and brought me down to something special? It was this. They found that in order to get anything done they must have voting power behind them. And they found that the people, the men, in their own station and rank in life, the college-bred men, were not ready to do anything for them; therefore they were compelled to go in with those who had felt the oppression and the grind of the power of riches. That is why they went into the Federation of Labor ....

I am very sorry - I had no idea that I should hear the teachers of Chicago attacked as they have been, and if the reader of that paper had worked in those schools, or if he had gone thru those schools, or if he had patronized those schools, he could not so attack these teachers.

I desire to make one more point. In every body of people there will always develop two parties. It is for the good of the nation that we have the radical and the conservative. It is for the good of any organization that there be two parties, but not necessarily factions. But what are you going to do if bitterness is developed? And what develops bitterness? That is the question. There is evidence and report of great bitterness between some members of the board and the teachers. That bitterness originated in the class antagonism, developed by the teachers in bringing wealthy tax-dodgers under the law. It has no basis in the classroom. I believe - and I have visited the schools of almost every large and middle-sized city and town in this country - I believe that nowhere does there exist a clearer vision of the aim of the public schools, and nowhere is there more life than indicates the conduct of the work in harmony with that vision than in the city of Chicago.<sup>29</sup>

The teachers were out of work for the year 1916-1917. The CTF took it upon themselves to support their thirty-eight. In the fall of 1917 they were reinstated through a new tenure law that Miss Haley had worked hard to have passed.<sup>30</sup> Ella must have been pleased when it happened.

The fall of 1917 was a time of major importance for another reason: the United States entered the war. Ella had rested long enough, and she was ready to do battle again. She went to work for the second Liberty Loan along with her friend, Mrs. George Bass.<sup>31</sup> This loan was one of five huge bonds floated to finance the war and sold to citizens in small denominations. She worked very hard selling the bonds, but she enjoyed the active involvement.

She continued to attend the NEA conventions and at Pittsburgh, in July 1918, she received a great tribute. When she walked into the meeting hall, everyone stood in silent ovation out of reverence to this great lady. She stepped up to the lecturn, and as she began to speak she glanced downward at her well-worn dress and said, "Why, I haven't thought of new clothes since the war."<sup>32</sup> It was her last educational appearance, and the last time Margaret Haley saw her alive.<sup>33</sup>

#### Closing a Great Life

In the fall, Ella went on a speaking tour for the fourth Liberty Loan Committee. It was a bad time because the Spanish strain of influenza had reached epidemic proportions in the country. She kept working without a thought to her health. In Cheyenne, Wyoming, she contracted the "flu," but refused to go to bed. When the financing trip was finished, she returned to Washington, D.C. to present the money to William McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury. She was quite ill by then, but refused to go to bed until her mission was accomplished.

Plate 6

Ella Flagg Young when she was working for the Liberty Loan Committee.

Chicago Historical Society. Used by permission.



She must have known it was her last. By now she had developed pneumonia, and Laura had contracted the flu. They both took to bed.

On Saturday morning October 26, 1918, Ella succumbed to the pneumonia.<sup>34</sup> Her Liberty Loan Committee friends, Miss Mary Synon, Mrs. George Bass, Mrs. Kellogg Fairbanks, and Mrs. Anntoinette Funk were appointed to represent the Treasury Department at the funeral which was to be in Chicago on Monday morning. The four women accompanied the body back. Laura had to remain in Washington because she was too sick to travel. In her will Ella left to Laura her personal property, twelve \$1000 bonds, and two-fifths of the yearly interest accrued on a trust fund established from the rest of her estate (all of which was converted to U.S., state, county and city bonds). The other three-fifths interest went to each of three other friends.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the influenza generated quarantine on public gatherings in Chicago, the body was transferred from one train to another to proceed to the cemetery where graveside services were held.<sup>36</sup> Teachers, friends, and board members attended. The Nineteenth Depot Company, Illinois Reserve Militia, accompanied the mourners to the grave so that a hint of a military funeral prevailed.<sup>37</sup> Secretary McAdoo had said that she "died in the service of her country, working like a soldier."<sup>38</sup> The flags of the city were flown at half mast and the board of education offices were draped in black. It was a fitting homage for a great leader of whom Jane Addams had said "She had more general intelligence and character than any other woman I knew."<sup>39</sup>

Superintendent Peter A. Mortenson (John D. Shoop had died during the summer) said that at a later date, after the epidemic of influenza had subsided, special services in her memory would be arranged. The newspapers had already mentioned that the quarantine was being lifted and they had also honored her well, but the superintendent's words were comforting because it made the occasion less final. There would be still another time in which to honor this lady who "had she been a man ... would have directed a great corporation, managed a railroad, served as governor of a state, or commanded an army."<sup>40</sup>



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>John T. McManis, Ella Flagg Young and a Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1916), p. 212 citing an editorial from the Chicago Herald, 23 October 1915.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Copy of the invitation to Mrs. Emmons Blaine, Serials 1E, Box 785, Ella Flagg Young Folder, Blaine Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

<sup>4</sup>"Personals," The Survey 35 (25 December 1915): 363.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Edmund J. James to Ella Flagg Young, 8 January 1916, Series 2/5/3, Box 104, President Edmund J. James General Correspondence, 1904-1919, University Archives, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

<sup>9</sup>"Personals," p. 363.

<sup>10</sup>Young to James, 20 January 1916, Series 2/5/3, Box 104, James Papers.

<sup>11</sup>Supra, p. 10; Elsie May Smith, "Findings of the New Chicago School Census," Journal of Education 76 (29 August 1912): 209.

<sup>12</sup>McManis, pp. 202-203.

<sup>13</sup>Margaret A. Haley to Mrs. MacMahon, 16 June 1916, Box 45, Folder 2, Chicago Teachers' Federation Files, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>14</sup>"Personals," p. 363. See also A. E. Winship. "Educators as I Have Known Them - (VIII.)," Journal of Education 82 (11 November 1915): 456; "Will Honor Mrs. Young," ibid. (2 December 1915): 547; William B. Owen, "Editorial," Educational Bi-Monthly 10 (December 1915): 185-86.

<sup>15</sup>"NEA Convention Discusses Problems," Daily Inter-Ocean, 12 July 1911, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>16</sup>"Mrs. Young Quizzed by New York Girls," Chicago Record Herald, 6 December 1912, p. 1, col. 2; "Reach out Says Ella Flagg Young," Daily Inter-Ocean, 4 December 1912, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>17</sup>"Mrs. Young Holds a Class in News," Chicago Herald, 23 October 1915, p. 16, col. 6.

<sup>18</sup>McManis, p. 223.

<sup>19</sup>Young, "Los Angeles Schools Ten Years in Advance of Times," Journal of Education 83 (24 February 1916): 199.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Olive Hyde Footer, "Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, Teacher, Woman, Friend," Harper's Bazar 45 (April 1911): 174; George H. Mead, "A Heckling School Board and an Educational Stateswoman," The Survey 31 (10 January 1914): 443-44.

<sup>22</sup>Owen, pp. 185-86.

<sup>23</sup>Young, "Los Angeles Schools . . .," p. 199.

<sup>24</sup>Hattie H. Harding to Blaine, 29 November 1917, Series 1E, Box 785, Ella Flagg Young Folder, Blaine Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Young to James, 20 January 1916, James Papers.

<sup>26</sup>"Mrs. Young Praises Work of Miss Goggin," Chicago Tribune, 5 January 1916, p. 1, col. 6.

<sup>27</sup>"Board Ousts Instructors: Federation Hit," Chicago Herald, 28 June 1916, p. 1, col. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Haley to MacMahon, 16 June 1916, CTF Files.

<sup>29</sup>Young, "A Reply [to Jacob Loeb]," Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Fifty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the National Education Association Held at New York City, July 1-8, 1916 54 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), p. 359. Note "reformed" spelling.

<sup>30</sup>Mary J. Herrick, The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971), pp. 131-37.

<sup>31</sup>"Ella F. Young Dies in Service of Her Country," Chicago Tribune, 27 October 1918, p. 9, col. 1.

<sup>32</sup>Haley autobiography, 1934-35, Version IV, p. 103.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>"Ella F. Young Dies ...," Chicago Tribune, 27 October 1918.

<sup>35</sup>Estate of Ella Flagg Young, Will #51693, Docket 181, p. 421 Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, Probate Division. In her will Mrs. Young specified where the interest money should go after the four friends' deaths: One-fifth to the Board of Education, City of Chicago; one-fifth to the Mary Thompson Hospital of Chicago; one-fifth to the Education Department of Chicago Woman's Club; one-fifth to the Art Institute; and the last fifth to the Chicago Public Library.

<sup>36</sup>"Military Tinge at Funeral of Ella F. Young," Chicago Tribune, 29 October 1918, p. 46, col. 3.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>"Flags to Fly at Half Mast Today for Mrs. Young," *ibid.*, 28 October 1918, p. 8, col. 4; "Ella F. Young Dies ...," *ibid.*, 27 October 1918.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Owen, p. 186.

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